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ABSTRACT

Produced as the result of a leadership training course for early childhood program directors and designed to be used by directors as an independent guide, this manual is a practical resource for program directors who do not have the time or funds to obtain the specialized training needed for effective administration. Contents focus on basic administrative functions such as communicating effectively, developing administrative policies and procedures, interviewing and hiring staff, conducting meetings of staff and parents, motivating and evaluating staff, solving problems and managing change, and planning and managing finances. Providing essential and basic information related to each topic, each section addresses a specific management or administrative responsiblity of the preschool or day care center director. Topics are addressed concisely, examples relevant to child care are used, and worksheets and exercises to facilitate learning are provided. (RH)

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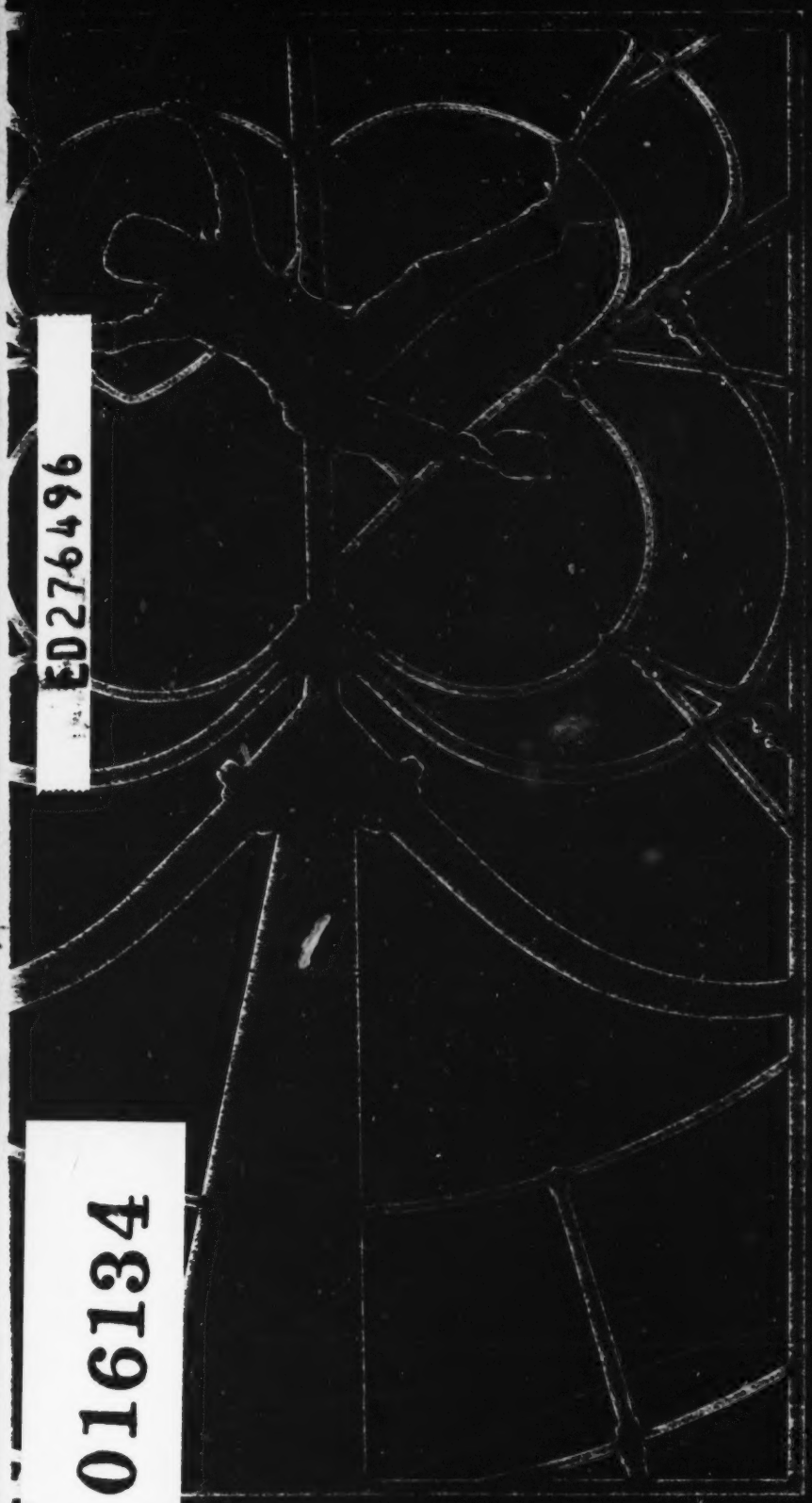

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The Human Side of Child Care Administration

A How-To Manual

Sherry Storm

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Pronoun references in this book are used only for editorial simplicity and are not intended to reflect stereotyped concepts of children or adults.

To Nancy Hailey Hunt

who understood the human side very well

Preface

This manual is the result of a leadership training course for early childhood program directors offered through San Jose State University in Santa Clara County, California. This unique course was funded by the Luke B. Hancock Foundation, Mervyn's, the United Way of Santa Clara County, Hewlett Packard, and Advanced Micro Devices. Because of this support there was no cost to the class participants. This book and the director's course on which it was based were the direct result of Nancy Hunt's personal contact with the funding agencies and San Jose State University.

The class included a variety of speakers. Each speaker was an expert on a particular segment of the director's job. Some speakers were from the field of early childhood education, but most were from corporate businesses. The speakers provided practical knowledge and business expertise that the directors were eager to learn. By condensing some of the course material into a manual, many directors throughout the country will gain access to this information.

Acknowledgments

One of the unique aspects of the Leadership Training for Early Childhood Education Directors, the course on which this manual is based, is that the training drew upon the business and corporate worlds. The contribution of the following individuals and their organizations is gratefully acknowledged. Each individual is listed with the section(s) of the manual to which she or he contributed.

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Introduction

The scope of the director's job

The director of most early childhood programs, preschools, or child care centers is responsible for hiring, firing, training, and supervising staff. Maintaining a congenial, productive work team is the most essential supervisory task. But most directors do not have a background in personnel management. The director is also expected to keep fiscal records and prepare financial reports for a governing board or an owner. Preparing a budget may also be part of the director's job. Yet few directors have had business training. Most directors act as representatives of the center to the general public and to parents with children in the programs. So many of these directors must rely on their outgoing and gregarious personality to compensate for their lack of education in public relations.

Is it any wonder that a large number of directors feel stressed and overwhelmed by the position? Of course job burnout is common in this field! Inadequate training for the job responsibilities is a common reality that has been ignored too long. Many child care directors feel isolated from their fellow staff members and fellow directors. Each director feels like the only one with problems!

The director of a child care program or a preschool was probably educated and trained as a teacher. Perhaps she took some courses in administration and supervision, but these usually proved to be of little practical value. All too often directors learn the job through a painful process of trial and error. If she is fortunate, the mistakes are minor and the harm is only to her own ego. Sometimes, however, because of the scope of her responsibilities, a director's oversight can cause more serious problems. Have you ever hired someone in a hurry because you were understaffed? Miscalculated the projected income for your center? Had a parent withdraw a child because of a misunderstanding? These situations force many directors of child care programs to seek administrator leadership training and professional growth programs. Recognizing the importance of the job, conscientious and dedicated directors want to grow to meet the challenges of their career. Unfortunately, many directors do not have the time or energy to attend training courses. This manual was designed as a resource to help directors apply their skills with people to the difficult tasks of effectively administering an early childhood program. In order to take full advantage of this material, it is strongly suggested that a director begin by assessing herself and the needs of her own particular center.

Who are you as a director?

The first step toward becoming an effective administrator is to analyze your own strengths and needs. Begin by asking yourself some important questions and providing honest answers. What is your personal philosophy of early childhood education, of supervision, of the role of families? Is your personal philosophy consistent with that of the program you direct? Do you enjoy working collaboratively with staff and parents? Is your personality such that you are comfortable as a facilitator, or do you feel the need to direct and control the entire operation?

Some early childhood educators believe strongly in the philosophy that teaching young children is primarily a process of facilitating children's development. However, the practice of some of these teachers does not reflect that philosophy. They may actually feel the need to control and direct children's activities at all times. These teachers are not comfortable fostering independence in children, nor do the teachers allow much

free choice or independent decision-making among children.

The same situation can occur among directors. Some directors see themselves as open to suggestions and willing to accept input from staff and parents, when actually the directors have strong needs to control the program. The administrative style of some directors may not be conducive to collaboration.

Knowing yourself and becoming aware of your own needs will help you as a director to establish a style of leadership that is effective and right for your program. Because so much of the director's task requires human interaction, this manual stresses the human side of child care administration. In recognition of the different personal styles of directors, the manual provides methods and techniques that will help directors, regardless of their personality differences, increase their effectiveness in working with people and administering programs for young children.

What are the needs of your program?

Taking an honest look at the program as it operates today is the first step toward making the improvements you want to make. One way to take that "honest look" is through a self-study process such as the one developed by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, the accreditation division of NAEYC. By analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of your facility, staff, business practices, and program against a standard, you can focus on those areas that need improvement. At the same time, you can be proud of those areas that are strong and effective!

There are a number of very positive results to be anticipated from a self-study. Aside from the insights into specific problem areas, the process of assessing the center as a whole can be a unifying force for staff. There is a "we're-all-in-this-together" feeling to the process as long as the analysis is broad enough to encompass the roles and responsibilities of all staff—including you! The common goal of self-improvement can create, or reinforce a climate of professionalism that is very stimulating within the staff and often becomes apparent to the outside community. Any increase in the efficiency of business operating procedures will likely result in improved services for the center's families. Better record-keeping, for example, means more information for the parents. If the self-study leads to an improvement in the quality of your program, then you may find a closer correlation between the program and your personal philosophy and goals.

There are really two ways to view self-study. It is similar to making a videotape of all the things that happen in your center. It can be threatening. It can also be an exciting and revealing experience. Because it is a self-study, *you* are making the videotape and *you* are deciding who will see it. Focusing on the potential for staff development, personal and professional growth, and the enhanced program for children and their parents helps you view self-study as an opportunity.

Once the self-study is completed and problems are identified, it is time to make plans to implement change. Setting priorities may be a task the director will want to do alone, but more likely you will want to include staff in making those decisions. Even changes that are primarily administrative will affect staff members. Any changes that directly involve staff will need their support in order to succeed.

How can you use this manual?

This manual is designed to be used by a director as an independent guide. Each section addresses a specific management or administrative responsibility of the preschool or child care center director. In some cases, worksheets and exercises are included to help make the material more meaningful. The sections are brief in recognition of the time constraints most directors face. This manual provides the most essential and basic information related to each topic. The self-directed approach of the manual allows each director to set her own pace and decide which topics suit her particular needs. The looseleaf format provides a resource for directors to collect additional information related to these and other topics.

Developing Personnel Policies

Introduction

The purpose of written personnel policies is to establish an understanding between the administration and the employee about the manner in which the center and the employee relate. Complete and well-written policies provide the director with a valuable management tool that aids in hiring and evaluating and can prevent legal problems or serve as evidence in a labor dispute. For the employee, it is reassuring to have a written record of the rights and responsibilities of the job and a clear picture of the center's organizational structure. Written personnel policies may help you avoid the conflicts that arise when the needs of the employee and the director are in opposition. Written policies reduce anxiety and create a more businesslike basis for expectations. These policies also provide for continuity when there are changes in management or staff.

The content of personnel policies will vary with the needs of each particular center. A small, private preschool may not need many written policies. The owner or director might be able to write all of the policies single-handedly. A larger center with many levels of management and several categories of staff would probably appoint a board subcommittee to write the personnel policies.

Here are some areas you might include:

- statement of philosophy
- organizational structure
- job descriptions
- contracts
- standards of performance
- benefits
- vacation and sick leave
- holiday schedules
- probationary periods
- evaluation procedures
- meeting schedules
- grievance procedures
- grounds for dismissal

For many centers, the personnel policies are given to the employee at the time of hiring. The employee reads, signs, and dates the policy, and it becomes a part of her employee file. Subsequent changes or updates of the policies would need to be signed.

In writing the personnel policies for your center, you need to be aware of the federal and state employment rights and wage and hours laws that will apply. The Fair Labor Standards Act covers many child care center employees. The exceptions are immediate family members of the employer; state, county, city, or school district employees; and administrative, executive, or professional employees (including state certified teachers). One good source of information is the nearest office of the Labor Commissioner or Labor Standards listed in your telephone book as part of the State Government listings. You can also write for information to Administrator of Wage and Hour Division, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20210.

Job descriptions

There should be a separate job description for each category of employee. The job description includes qualifications, work schedule, pay rate, opportunity for pay raises and the criteria that will determine when a raise is given, and a specific list of the job responsibilities. The job description should also include information about how this job fits into the center's organizational structure. An employee needs to have an overview of how her job relates to the jobs of other staff members. Presenting a written overview may eliminate misunderstandings about the limits of one's own responsibility and those of a fellow employee. The ab-

sence of clearly defined roles is a common source of conflict between employees. Precise job descriptions can reduce the likelihood of this problem in your center. The job description lists any required attendance at staff meetings or center functions not held during the workday. Expectations regarding attendance at workshops or enrollment in classes might be included in the job description. A well-conceived job description is extremely helpful in hiring new employees.

Standards of performance

You may want to include a section in your personnel policies that gives the employee guidelines about the expectations you have for her. For example, the job description will state the hours a teacher spends in the classroom. The standards of performance might describe the kinds of activities the teacher would plan for the children and the type of role model you expect her to be for the children and parents. This section of the document might be combined with a description of the evaluation procedure so that an employee will know at what point and by what criteria her performance will be measured.

Probationary period

If your new employees must successfully complete a probationary period before their employment is considered permanent, the length and conditions of that probationary period need to be clearly stated in the personnel policies. In some centers, vacation and sick leave benefits do not begin to accrue until after the employee has become a permanent member of the staff. Sometimes the probationary period will be extended due to illness or extenuating circumstances. Each new employee must understand the terms of the probationary period at the time of hiring. Many centers use the probationary period as a time to assess new employees' physical and psychological competence for working with children.

Benefits

The size and budget of a center determine the benefits that are available to an employee, but you must provide Social Security, worker's compensation, and unemployment compensation. The employee needs to be aware of the liability coverage for staff members while at the center. If the center provides free or reduced rate child care for employees' children, this should be stated in the personnel policies. Other benefits might include meals, use of the staff library or center equipment, or paid holidays. Many centers have group medical and dental insurance plans available to employees.

Vacation and sick leave

The personnel policies should include information about vacations and sick leave. For example, there may be a policy regarding the length of time a staff member must be employed before she is entitled to a vacation. You may also want to include a policy that does not permit staff vacations to conflict with certain events such as parent conferences or party days. If a center offers paid sick leave, the policy needs to address several issues. It should state the number of days allowed within a year, at what point a staff member becomes eligible for sick leave, whether or not accumulated sick leave can be carried from year to year, and whether unused sick leave will be paid at termination of employment. If hiring substitutes is a problem for your program, there may need to be a policy that restricts the number of regular staff taking a vacation simultaneously. The procedure for obtaining substitutes should be clearly stated.

Decision-making procedures

Within the policies, you should formally describe the procedures that will be used in making policy changes and day-to-day decisions. If your center must clear schedule changes through a board, for example, an employee needs to be aware of this procedure. If you expect staff input on ways to improve the program, you may want to include in the personnel policies a statement that encourages suggestions. Do you want staff members to submit items for the staff meeting agenda? Will staff members be asked to evaluate employees during the probationary period? How are job assignments decided? Who will decide when a discipline problem needs to be discussed with a parent? As you develop and review these procedures, you need to clearly state them in the personnel policies.

Grievance procedures

Every employee has a right to know the correct procedure for airing her grievances. For small centers, the only recourse may be to discuss the grievance with the director. In larger centers, there may be a personnel committee, a board of directors, or another level of administration to which an employee has the right to appeal. Personnel policies need to include this information.

Grounds for dismissal

The standards of performance section of the personnel policies lets the employee know what she is expected to do. The grounds for dismissal section lets the employee know what behaviors are unacceptable.

Your policies should enumerate the types of misconduct that are grounds for dismissal.

Reviewing the personnel policies

Once you have prepared a draft of the policies, set up an advisory board to review the document. Advisory boards can have a diverse membership. Some centers rely on community volunteers. Networking with other center directors will help you establish your board and allow you to become a resource for other directors. If possible, have an individual with legal experience or business expertise to serve on the board. It would be helpful to have one or two members with early childhood education experience. This board should correct any omissions and vague or ambiguous wording in the policies. Even well-written personnel policies may be challenged, but a critical reading by a board will make the challenge less likely.

Updates and revisions

Personnel policies should be examined periodically to ensure that they meet the needs of the administration and the employees they are designed to serve. A schedule or program change might necessitate revising job descriptions, or an organizational change might require other revisions. Review your policies if a problem arises that could be circumvented by revising the material. If the policies are written by a committee and subject to approval by a board, then one section of the document should detail the ways in which policy changes will be handled. You should also determine how staff members will be informed of policy changes.

Sample personnel policies

The following sample personnel policies represent some of the information you may want to include in writing policies for your center. These sample personnel policies do not include all the information you will need to provide in your own center's policies. After you read the sample policies, use the worksheet on page 8 to evaluate them.

Crestleigh Child Care Center
Personnel Policies

Introduction

The primary goal of the Crestleigh Child Care Center is to serve the children and families of the Crestleigh community by offering a nurturing and stimulating environment for young children between the ages of two and six. The center operates all year except for the last week of August and the last week of December. The hours of operation are from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Organizational structure

The director is responsible for the overall operation of the center. All teachers, the secretary, cook, and janitor are directly supervised by the director. Teacher assistants are supervised by teachers but are ultimately responsible to the director.

Job descriptions

Title: Director

Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Qualifications:

The director must have a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or a relevant field, and at least 3 years of full-time teaching experience with young children. degree in ECE/CD.

Responsibilities:

1. Assure that licensing requirements are met at all times.
2. Hire, train, supervise, and evaluate staff members.
3. Hold monthly staff meetings.
4. Enforce and review personnel policies.
5. Keep financial records, pay bills, and collect fees.
6. Order supplies for the center.
7. Prepare and adhere to an annual budget.
8. Orient parents to the center and inform them of center policies.
9. Be available to parents for personal or telephone conferences.
10. Hold parent meetings at least three times per year.
11. Represent the center at community functions when necessary.
12. Maintain contacts within the community such as the local elementary schools, health department, and library, etc.
13. Designate a staff member to serve as acting director when necessary.
14. Arrange for substitutes for absent staff members.

Salary: $14,000 to $16,000 based upon experience.

Title: Head teacher

Hours: 5:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Qualifications:
The head teacher will have at least an A.A. degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development and 1 year of teaching experience.

Responsibilities:
1. Open the building each morning at 6:00 a.m.
2. Assume responsibility (as acting director) for the operation of Crestleigh Child Care Center in the director's absence.
3. Plan and execute appropriate activities for the children each day in art, music, language, and motor development.
4. Plan and execute appropriate activities for the children each week in science, math, and multicultural experiences.
5. Observe and evaluate each child's progress, and provide a written report to the director and parents at least twice during the year (January and May).
6. Work cooperatively with staff members and parents.
7. Be available for parent conferences when necessary.
8. Attend monthly staff meetings and parent functions.
9. Notify the director in the event of absence.

Pay schedule:
The head teacher will be hired at the rate of $6.00 per hour.

Title: Teacher

Hours: 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon (a.m. teachers) or 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. (p.m. teachers)

Qualifications:
A teacher shall have at least an A.A. degree in Child Development.

Responsibilities:
1. Plan and execute appropriate activities for the children each day in art, music, language, and motor development.
2. Plan and execute appropriate activities for the children each week in science, math, and multicultural experiences.
3. Observe and evaluate each child's progress, and provide a written report to the director and parents at least twice a year (January and May).
4. Work cooperatively with staff members and parents.
5. Be available for parent conferences when necessary.
6. Attend monthly staff meetings and parent functions.
7. Eat meals with the children.
8. Notify the director in the event of absence.

Pay schedule:
A teacher shall be hired at the rate of $5.25 per hour for a 6-hour day.

Title: Teacher assistant

Hours: 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon (a.m. teacher assistant) or 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. (p.m. teacher assistant)

Qualifications:
A teacher assistant will have completed a minimum of 6 units of Early Childhood Education.

Responsibilities:
1. Assist the teacher in the supervision of the children, preparation of materials, and observation of individual children. The teacher assistant's activities each day will be at the discretion of the head teacher.
2. Handle final clean-up at the end of the day (p.m. teacher assistant).
3. Alert the director when supplies are running low or when toys or equipment are in need of repair (a.m. teacher assistant).

Pay schedule:
A teacher assistant will be hired at the rate of $4.50 per hour for a 6-hour day.

Title: Secretary

Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Qualifications:
The secretary will have at least 6 months of office experience, a typing speed of 50 wpm, and a pleasant phone manner.

Responsibilities:
1. Answer the telephone and keep records of telephone messages.
2. Keep up-to-date attendance records and files on children and staff.
3. Handle correspondence for the center as directed.

Pay schedule:
A secretary will be hired at the rate of $5.25 per hour.

Title: Janitor

Hours: 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Qualifications:
The janitor must be reliable and have standards of safety and cleanliness.

Responsibilities:
1. Maintain the building and grounds in a clean and safe manner.
2. Wash kitchen and bathroom floors daily.
3. Empty all trash cans daily.
4. Wash playroom and classroom floors daily.
5. Sweep or hose corridors and parking area weekly.
6. Put trash cans out and bring empty trash cans back in weekly.
7. Wax all floors monthly.

continued on p. 7.

8. Clean all windows monthly.
9. Store playground toys at the end of each day.
10. Secure the building at the end of each day.

Pay schedule:
The janitor will be hired at the rate of $5.00 per hour for a 4-hour day.

Title: Cook

Hours: 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Qualifications:
The cook will have a minimum of 2 years experience as an institutional cook.

Responsibilities:
1. Prepare a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack each day.
2. Plan menus, and request appropriate quantities of foodstuffs to be ordered by the director.
3. Keep records of menus, recipes, and quantities required.
4. Keep posted records of each child's allergies and consider them in meal planning.
5. Wash and sterilize all dishes and utensils according to proper sanitation procedures.
6. Keep kitchen area clean.

Pay schedule:
The cook will be paid an hourly wage, based on experience, determined at the discretion of the director.

Benefits

Required plans

All employees of the Crestleigh Child Care Center are required to participate in the Federal Social Security program, with salary deductions made accordingly. All employees are covered by the state worker's compensation law, and any accident resulting in injury while on the job must be reported to the director.

Optional plan

All employees of the Crestleigh Child Care Center who work more than 30 hours per week are eligible for health benefits covered under the Madison Hospital Plan. At the time of employment, the employee will be asked to indicate whether payroll deductions for hospital plan payments should be taken. An employee who does not enroll at the time of employment may choose to do so at the next enrollment period.

Vacation and sick leave

All employees of the Crestleigh Child Care Center receive two weeks of paid vacation per year. One week of vacation time shall be taken the last week of August or the last week of December. Employees may not take the first week of September or conference times as their additional week of vacation. Employee vacation schedules must be approved by the director to ensure adequate staffing. In the event of a conflict, the employee having the greater seniority will receive first choice of vacation times.

After 3 months of employment, an employee is entitled to 6 paid sick leave days per year. Sick leave days may not be carried over from year to year.

Teachers and teacher assistants may request a leave day to attend a workshop, conference, seminar, or any other professional development activity. Payment for that leave day will be at the discretion of the director.

Grounds for dismissal

Crestleigh personnel will be dismissed for
1. Inappropriate and unprofessional behavior toward a child, a parent, or a member of the staff.
2. Frequent absences or tardiness that results in hardship to the children and the staff.
3. Teaching or behavior that is inconsistent with the philosophy of the Crestleigh Child Care Center.
4. Teaching or behavior that does not meet requirements included in the personnel policies.

Personnel Policies Worksheet

See suggested answers on page 9.

Now that you have read the sample personnel policies, see if you can answer these questions about the Crestleigh Child Care Center.

1. Who is responsible for opening the building each day? Who is responsible for closing the building each day?

2. Are teachers required to have written lesson plans?

3. Are teachers required to stay until the last child is picked up?

4. Why are the last week of August and the last week of December designated as paid vacation weeks?

5. Is there paid staff planning time? When?

6. Is the chain of responsibility clear?

7. Are employees required to give 2 weeks notice before resigning?

8. Is there a relationship between the qualifications and starting pay rate for any employee?

9. Did you spot any other omissions or inconsistencies?

Answers to Personnel Policies Worksheet

1. The head teacher is responsible for opening the building at 6:00 a.m. Although the janitor is charged with securing the building when he leaves at 7:00 p.m., no one has been given the specific duty of closing the school at 6:00 p.m.

2. No. According to these policies a teacher is not required to write lesson plans.

3. This responsibility is not mentioned. Clearly, the head teacher is in charge during the early morning hours before the director arrives, but it is unclear from these policies who takes responsibility when the director leaves at 5:00 p.m.

4. The policies state that the center is closed these 2 weeks.

5. Paid staff planning time is not mentioned in these policies.

6. The paragraph titled "Organizational structure" is clear, but not complete. It does not mention to whom the director is responsible.

7. Information about resignation is omitted from these policies.

8. Both the director's salary and the cook's hourly wage are based on experience.

9. Other additions that would make these personnel policies more complete:

The director's responsibilities include evaluation of staff, but the evaluation procedure is not described. No mention is made in the job descriptions of opportunities for pay raises. Staff meetings and parent functions are mentioned, but it is not clear whether they occur during regular work hours. If not, how are staff paid for that time? These policies also do not include probationary periods and grievance procedures.

Interviewing and Hiring

Managing the hiring process

The staff is the most essential component in a successful program. Even with a beautiful facility, a well-planned curriculum, and a generous selection of well-chosen materials, every director knows that without good teachers and other competent staff members the program will struggle. Thus the hiring process is a very important part of the director's job and affects all other aspects of her role as manager.

Certainly, firing an employee is one of the most unpleasant tasks a director can face. If you look at improved hiring techniques as a preventive measure against having to fire, you will give the hiring process the kind of attention it deserves!

Where to look

Finding qualified job candidates to interview is a dilemma for many directors. One way of approaching the task is to put yourself in the place of a potential employee and ask yourself how you would go about looking for a job. Job banks of local NAEYC Affiliate Groups and other professional organizations and agencies are good sources. College career centers and campus bulletin boards are other outlets. Networking with current staff and other professionals in the community can be fruitful. If you can describe the kind of candidate you are looking for, other staff members may be an excellent source. Networking with other directors for hiring purposes is just one way our profession has learned to cooperate. Newspaper advertising is a common technique, but consider more localized advertising through neighborhood or nearby school newsletters.

When you advertise a position, be as specific as possible about the job qualifications needed and the job's responsibilities. Specificity will improve the quality of the responses you receive and act as a screening device that will save you both time and trouble. One often overlooked source of employee candidates is a "future file." When you encounter promising prospects at times when there are no openings, file their applications so you can refer to them when an opening does arise.

Assessing need

The hiring process begins with a job vacancy. The first question that you must ask is, "Do I really need to hire someone?" Sometimes the job responsibilities could be done by someone else, and you could eliminate the expense of an extra employee. However, if you decide that it is necessary to hire a replacement, then the next step is to determine the selection criteria.

Selection criteria

The selection criteria for a position are those specific job-related skills and abilities required to perform the job. If you have a well-written, detailed job description, use that as the basis for the selection criteria. The job description should begin with any state or federally mandated education and experience requirements for the position. Then you should study the job description and create a list of the qualities and skills that you will look for in a prospective employee applying for that position. Use the material in the Developing Personnel Policies section (pp. 3–9) to help you develop job descriptions.

Let's say you are hiring a caregiver for toddlers. Here is the list of selection criteria you might write:

1. A.A. degree in Child Development
2. One year of experience with children younger than three years

3. Pleasant voice and friendly attitude
4. Attentive to health and sanitation conditions
5. Easygoing and unhurried
6. Positive role model for parents and children in health and safety, cleanliness, speech and language, and social relationships

You will also need to consider the personalities of the people with whom this employee will interact. Suppose there are two centers looking for a caregiver with the qualifications just listed. In one center that caregiver will replace a head teacher and interact with two other caregivers who have worked at the center for less than 6 months. The director is in the process of opening a second center across town. The director is looking for someone who can be responsible for the toddler program while she is preoccupied with the new facility. In the second center the new caregiver will interact with parents of the toddlers frequently because it is an on-site, employer-supported center. The director is a detail-oriented person. She wants employees who are well-organized and meticulous. Even though the job descriptions and qualifications for the two positions are similar, the same individual would not necessarily be right for both jobs. You should list the desired traits and personal characteristics as part of the selection process.

Once you have a clear list of specific criteria, you can begin to plan the actual interview by formulating the questions.

Interview

The questions you ask will fall into three basic categories: fact finding, open ended, and problem solving. Using the selection criteria, decide which type of question is most effective in determining whether this applicant meets each criterion. Fact-finding questions clarify information from the application and résumé.

"How many children were in your group at the center?"

"Have you participated in many parent conferences?"

Open-ended questions allow the candidate to elaborate and, therefore, give the interviewer a chance to learn more about the person.

"Tell me about your present position."

"Describe some of the activities that you feel you did particularly well."

"What kind of people do you like working with?"

"What would you like to be doing 5 years from now?"

Problem-solving questions present hypothetical situations.

"How would you handle a child that bites?"

"How would you help a child cope with the fear of loud noises?"

Let's look again at the applicants for the toddler caregiver positions described above. Fact-finding questions might be used to clarify details about the education and experience listed on their résumés.

What kind of interview questions will help you determine whether or not the applicant is attentive to health and sanitation conditions? You might use an open-ended question such as

"What kind of precautions were used when a child returned after an absence due to illness?"

Using problem-solving questions might also be helpful.

"If you knew that a child in your care had allergies, how would that affect your plans for the group?"

"How would you keep track of each child's toileting habits during the toilet training period?"

You might ask open-ended questions about other jobs the applicant held and listen for clues about her organizational skills and powers of observation. You should also prepare a series of questions to ask her former employers.

Legal implications

It is important to be aware of the legal issues in interviews and application questions. In an effort to discourage discrimination in hiring, the Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines for pre-employment inquiry list some questions to avoid.

1. Name and place of birth: Questions that refer to ancestry or national origin should be avoided. No reference to a name change should be made. It is also improper to ask whether the applicant is from another part of this country.

2. Life style: Questions concerning marital status, pregnancy, and child care arrangements are to be avoided. You may not ask about the spouse's job or salary. Questions about how the applicant will travel to and from work are prohibited. These questions might directly or indirectly place limits on the applicant's job opportunities.

3. Age: The application form must not require a date of birth or current age. Because the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 was aimed at ending discrimination against the worker aged 40 to 70, you may not ask questions such as

"Do you get along well with people younger than you?"

"This is a demanding job. Do you think you can handle the physical work?"

Because of child labor laws, you are *required* to have proof of age for any applicant younger than 18.

4. Physical and mental limitations: An employer can have a physical or mental requirement for a job only if that employer can prove that without that requirement the job could not be performed safely or adequately. Employers are expected to make reasonable accommodations for the handicapped, such as alteration of schedules or the physical setting. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 forbids questions that would limit a person's job opportunities based on physical or mental limitations that are not related to the job. If you have concerns about hiring someone with a specific disability, it can be reassuring and enlightening to speak with a rehabilitation center or community agency about the specific handicap.

5. Sex, height, and weight: Sex is not a justifiable occupational qualification. Unless the job demonstrably requires that the applicant have a particular physical size, questions relating to size are not acceptable.

6. Race and religion: Any question that directly or indirectly refers to race must be avoided. Although the employer is expected to make reasonable accommodations for an employee's religion, the courts have found acceptable questions based on the work schedule for a particular job. If, for example, the job will require working on religious holidays—that information can be given to the applicant. The interviewer must avoid, however, questions that elicit religious preference or practices. Some church-related child care centers may require that employees be members of their church. These cases have yet to be tested in the courts.

7. Arrest records: While it is legal to ask if someone has been convicted of a crime, it is not legal to ask if the applicant has ever been arrested.

This list of questions and topics to avoid is incomplete, but it covers the areas most likely to be a problem for child care directors. In general, all of the information elicited from the applicant by questions or the application form must be directly related to job qualifications. All applicants for the job must be aware of the job requirements, and all applicants for the job must be evaluated against the same standards.

Reading the application

It takes only a moment to look at the application and determine whether this candidate meets the basic job qualifications. If so, there are some specific things to note as you read the application in more detail.

Are there unaccounted for periods of time?

Are there time overlaps that seem improbable, such as attending two colleges in different towns or holding two full-time jobs?

Does the applicant list any previous jobs, but none for an extended length of time?

Are parts of the application left blank?

Is the information given presented in a straightforward manner?

Is the application neat and the spelling correct?

Thoroughly reading the applications will screen out applicants that will not be interviewed. This reading should also address some of the selection criteria or at least give you some specific material on which to base questions.

Sometimes there are more job openings in a town than there are qualified applicants. When this happens, a director may want to glean information from the application that will help her "sell" her particular center to a desirable candidate. For example, if the application shows a strong interest in music, mention the strong music program in your center (or your desire to find someone who could implement one!).

Who will conduct the interview?

If you as the director are the only person interviewing the applicant, your plan will include the selection criteria, the interview questions based on those criteria, and the method you will use to evaluate the candidate. If you have considered these issues, you will be more apt to ask the right questions to obtain the information you need and to weigh that information objectively.

For some centers, the responsibility for hiring is a shared responsibility. A board subcommittee, a parent advisor, or a personnel officer may have input or even final authority over the director when hiring. In these cases it is critical for all parties to agree with the selection criteria.

Some directors will seek input from others even when the hiring responsibility falls solely on their shoulders. As a director, you may decide you would like to have an advisory board of parents or professional colleagues help interview key personnel. You might allow staff members who will be closely in contact with the new employee to have some input in the final decision between two or more equally qualified applicants.

Thus, the hiring responsibility might be shared in one of several ways. You could seek input on the selection criteria, but conduct the interviews yourself. Or you might have one or several people handle the interviews and then use their input to make your final decision. The final evaluation of the applicants could be a group decision.

If more than one person interviews the applicant, divide the selection criteria so that each interviewer is looking for specific information. In the case of the toddler caregiver, for example, it might be necessary for one person to concentrate on experience and personal philosophy and another interviewer to concentrate on health issues. Try to streamline your interview approach, and determine specific questions for each interviewer.

Conducting the interview

The interviewer should begin by making the applicant as comfortable as possible. Offering the applicant a glass of water or a cup of coffee, some casual small talk, or a tour of the center creates a less stressful situation. Your goal should be to put the applicant at ease so that you can learn more about her as a person. It is important to outline the structure of the interview for the applicant. Let her know what to expect. For example, tell her you will allow time for questions about the job at the end of the hour, she will meet other staff members, etc.

Once the structure of the interview has been established, it is important to stay on task and stick to the topic. Some job applicants are very skillful at turning the interview around by flattering a prospective employer and not answering the necessary questions. If this happens, it's possible to return to the task without making the applicant feel uncomfortable. For example, if the applicant asks,

"Were you a teacher before you became director?"
"Yes, I was."
"Do you get to spend much time with the children now?"
"Not as much as I'd like."
"Don't you miss that?"
"You know, I'd really like to talk more about this but I'm concerned about running out of time. Why don't we finish what we have to do and see if we have time to visit after that?"

Learn to use silence to allow the applicant to elaborate. When you ask a question, wait for an answer. If the answer is very brief, waiting silently with an expectant expression on your face may elicit more information.

Sometimes mirroring the applicant's words will elicit an elaboration. For example,

"What were your responsibilities in your last job?"
"I was the head teacher for the after-school child care program."
"You were the head teacher?"
"Yes, I was responsible for scheduling staff and organizing activities for 35 children."

Paraphrasing is another technique similar to mirroring. When you paraphrase, you do not repeat the exact words but try to re-word the same message, including any emotions you hear.

"What were your responsibilities in your last job?"
"I was the head teacher for the after-school child care program."
"It sounds as though you had a lot of responsibility, but you enjoyed the challenge."
"Yes! I was really pleased with the way the program developed. I think we took a custodial care program and turned it into an educational one!"

Common interviewing errors

1. *Telegraphing:* Some interviewers ask leading questions that require only a "yes" or "no" answer. Usually the expected answer is very obvious! The telegrapher might ask, "Do you think you can handle the job?"

Alternative: Ask general, ambiguous questions that draw out the candidate. "Tell me about your responsibilities with Head Start."

2. *Talking too much:* To cover her own nervousness, an interviewer might describe the job, the center, the staff, her own family, etc. It's difficult to learn much about an applicant who doesn't get a chance to talk!

Alternative: Ask simple, basic questions in the applicant's area of interest.

"I see on your application that you spent a summer in Alaska. How is child care different there?"

Learn to use silence!

3. *Taking dictation:* Interviewing with a pencil in hand and jotting down notes after each answer may make you so intent on taking good notes that you forget to listen. You may finish the interview with no personal impression of the applicant.

Alternative: Put the pencil down unless there is a specific point, such as a reference name that you are likely to forget. In general, your attention should be on the applicant during the interview. Notes can be jotted down after the applicant has left.

4. *Advertising attitudes:* If an interviewer asks non-neutral questions or verbalizes value judgments in response to the answers, it becomes clear to the applicant where the interviewer stands on issues and what answers are going to be favorably received.

Alternative: Be nonjudgmental. Interview with a poker face that doesn't reveal too many opinions.

5. *Filling out the application:* Some interviewers go through the interview reaffirming all the information that was on the application and never ask other questions!

Alternative: Read the application before the interview and pick out specific points that you would like to probe further. Asking about the applicant's education will start her talking, and quick, probing questions will encourage elaboration.

"I see you attended Pacific Oaks College. Do you feel the program was good preparation for the work you're doing now?"
"Well, I wish I'd taken more psychology courses."
"Oh?"
"Yes, I guess relating to parents has been difficult for me sometimes."
"How so?"

Other quick probes to keep the candidate talking are "Because?" "Why is that?"

6. *Interviewing for a friend:* Some interviewers become so involved in making the applicant feel comfortable that they don't go beyond small talk. They see a friendly face and feel intuitively that this is the right person for the job.

Alternative: Consider the selection criteria as a checklist of points that must be covered within the allotted interview. Allow a brief time to put the applicant at ease, and schedule your interviews so that once the checklist has been completed you can still spend some time getting acquainted if the candidate seems to be a good prospect.

Reference checks

Asking a prospective employee for a reference will confirm the amount and type of her experience. Sometimes a former employer will be candid and answer your specific questions about the applicant's skills, punctuality, sense of responsibility, and job performance.

Be aware that some employers will not give references or will refuse to give a reference if the employee left under unfortunate circumstances.

If the application lists a company or school as a reference, ask the applicant for the name of the person to whom she was directly responsible. You will want to contact that person for a reference.

Making the final choice

After completing all of the interviews, some of the candidates may be eliminated. The remaining applicants must be evaluated by measuring each against the selection criteria, using the application, the interview information, and the references.

Sometimes the choice is quite obvious. The director who makes the decision alone or with help, may feel only one applicant meets the criteria or is the perfect match for the job.

However, if more than one applicant seems like a good choice, you may decide to make the final decision in one of several ways. For some directors, the best way to handle the final decision is through an informal discussion. Even if the decision is going to be an individual one, you may want to find another person to serve as a sounding board as you weigh the pros and cons of each applicant. A good choice for a sounding board might be a professional colleague or a close friend. Or you may want to score each applicant on each criterion. First decide whether each selection criterion is equally important. If not, which will be worth more points? Once you have a point system, you can objectively evaluate the applicants by counting the number of points for each and deciding which is the best candidate.

Informing the applicants

At the end of the interview, you probably will say something similar to "I'll be getting back to you next week." If for some reason your decision has been delayed, it is important to contact the applicants and let them know the situation. Not only is it very inconsiderate to fail to let people know whether they have been chosen, it may irritate them enough so that when a future opening occurs they will not apply. First contact the applicant you have selected and offer her the job. Only after you have officially hired that person will you want to call the other candidates and tell them you have hired someone else. If you had several particularly good applicants, mention to them that you would like to keep their applications in case you have other openings in the future.

Hiring Worksheet

See suggested answers on page 17.

Think of a particular position in your center. Consider both the job responsibilities and the people with whom the new employee will interact, then decide which of the following traits you would look for in an applicant.

persuasive
friendly
frank
good listener
conscientious
detail oriented
creative
decisive
slow paced
precise
cautious
straightforward
tactful
responsive
forceful
playful
efficient
organized
aggressive
cooperative
critical
expressive
outgoing
independent

Concentrate on a few traits that seem critical for that position. How would you plan the interview to determine whether an applicant has those traits?

Can you think of another position at your center that would require a different set of characteristics?

Answers to Hiring Worksheet

In our example of the caregiver for toddlers, suppose the director has decided she would like someone who is

friendly
responsive
conscientious
efficient
slow paced
cautious
expressive
outgoing

Through personal observation during the interview and by asking the applicant to spend time in the toddler classroom and then obtaining feedback from staff, the director might decide that she could best judge whether the applicant is

friendly
responsive
slow paced
expressive
outgoing

The director might ask open-ended questions about how the applicant would handle specific situations to judge her ability to be conscientious and efficient.

Open-ended questions such as the following would help her judge the applicant on these traits.

How would you prepare for three new children entering your classroom on the same day?

How would you handle a situation where a child has not been picked up at the end of the day and it is your responsibility to close the center?

Then the director might want to confirm her assessment of the applicant by asking the opinion of staff members and the applicant's former employer on these specific traits.

Communicating Effectively

Communicating Effectively

Communication skills

When a child care center director assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the program, the self-study focuses on interactions that occur among staff members, among children and staff, and among parents and staff. Much of the atmosphere of a school or child care center depends upon these interactions. Our perception of a particular facility as pleasant or depressing, and well-run or disorganized is often shaped by the way people communicate with one another at the center. Because the director is the focal point of the staff and is the representative of the center to the parents and the general public, the director's communication skills are of primary importance. This section is designed to provide a practical guide to analyzing and strengthening your communication skills as a director.

It is 8:00 a.m. and a mother walks into the office with a look of great concern. She asks to speak with the director privately. Just then the telephone rings and a teacher assistant wants to know if she can come in an hour late this morning. Then a teacher sticks her head in the office and, seeing the director is busy, leaves on the desk a note that reads: "Paul is hysterical because David spilled paint on his new shoes."

Directors are in constant communication with people. The director is available to staff, parents, and children to answer questions or listen to problems. Most directors of child care programs spend a significant part of their time answering questions about the center for parents that are looking for a place for their child. The director talks to potential clients on the telephone and gives them a tour of the center. The director wants to give parents an accurate orientation to the goals and philosophy of the center so that they can decide whether the program will suit their family.

Directors deal with salespeople, professionals within the community, and fellow educators regularly. The director often disseminates information from these resources to staff members and parents.

Professionals in early childhood education need to be personable. Being friendly, articulate, and able to listen well are important qualities for the director. But even the most experienced director occasionally has communication problems. Sometimes it is hard to find the right words. A director may find that a staff member has misinterpreted what seemed to be a simple request. Sometimes another person's reaction, or lack of reaction, to a statement is baffling. It's helpful to understand the fundamental principles of communication and how they apply to the director's role.

There are two basic types of communication. Each type has its place in the director's repertoire.

One-way communication is a monologue or a lecture designed to supply information. A demand is another form of one-way communication. When time is an important factor, such as in an emergency, this type of communication is very efficient.

But for most communication, we need reciprocation.

Two-way communication is a dialogue. This type of communication is useful when you want to be certain you are understood or when there may be a need for clarification.

The mother who came to your office at 8:00 needs to express her concern that her son is not sleeping through the night. The director and staff must understand her situation before making suggestions on how to deal with the problem.

When the teacher assistant telephones to ask for permission to be an hour late, the director needs to find out more about the circumstances behind the request.

The situation with Paul and David and the spilled paint will probably require some patient dialogue with both boys and perhaps the teacher.

Getting the point across

Communication can be defined as the expression of thought. First the speaker forms an idea and then selects words to convey that thought to someone else. The speaker's feelings will influence the choice of words, the tone of voice, and the accompanying gestures and other behavior during the communication. The listener's feelings will affect her ability to interpret accurately. Communication has three important elements. The *content*, or the actual words; the *method*, including nonverbal communication; and the *reception* or listening.

The speaker has a thought to express. The speaker also has a reason for wanting to express that thought. Knowing the goal or outcome of the communication helps the speaker decide on the method and content. Sometimes the speaker seeks information and sometimes she expects action.

It is the response of the listener, not the intention of the speaker, that determines the success of the communication. The speaker's intended message is translated into a specific string of words (content) and is combined with eye contact, tone of voice, and nonverbal communication (method) and communicated as a behavior that the listener perceives. If the speaker behaves in a manner inconsistent with her intent, the listener may not respond in the expected way. It is important for the speaker to be sensitive to the listener's response and adjust her behavior accordingly.

Director: "Mrs. Crawford, here is Laura's artwork that was on display for Parents' Night."

Parent: "Oh, I'm sorry I wasn't there. Laura was upset that I didn't come but I have been having car trouble. I was worried that I might get stuck somewhere at night."

Director: "That's understandable. There's no way you can make it to every parent meeting. I only mentioned it because Laura was very proud that the painting had been displayed."

Here is a case where the director made an innocent remark in passing at the end of the day, but the parent responded as if she were being singled out for her previous failure to attend Parents' Night. The director was quick to recognize Mrs. Crawford's feelings and let her know that the intention was only to remind the parent, not to make her feel guilty.

Sometimes when the speaker fails to get the expected response, she does not recognize her responsibility as the speaker to make her intentions clear. If she assumes that the listener is not paying attention or is in some other way responsible for the miscommunication, she often amplifies her effort by talking louder or repeating the same message using stronger language. It is more likely that the speaker will get the expected response by trying a different approach. That may mean choosing new words or assuming a different physical position. Sometimes physically moving can trigger a new response in the listener. Being sensitive to the image projected at that moment can be a key factor.

As the director bustled into the playroom, removed a calendar from the bulletin board, and began to hurry out the door again, she smiled at the teacher and said, "Everyone looks happy in here. I'm glad the children are enjoying the new easels."

The teacher replied, "Excuse me, but when you have time I'd like to talk with you about something."

The director let her arms drop to her side and gave the teacher her full attention. "Is it something we should talk about right now?"

The director was making casual conversation, but understood immediately that the teacher perceived her as busy and preoccupied and perhaps unapproachable. The director adjusted her body language and tone of voice to let the teacher know that nothing was more important at the moment than the teacher's problem.

Part of the responsibility of the speaker to get the message across is being sensitive to the listener's state of mind. Although you can never be certain of another person's thoughts, you can appreciate that person's perspective. There are a number of factors that can make a listener less receptive. If the listener is tired or under stress the message will not be as well received. Stopping a parent at 6:00 p.m. to tell her you need an updated immunization record is an example of poor timing. Distractions also make listening more difficult. How likely are you to have a productive conversation with a teacher about the curriculum during busy arrival time? By choosing an appropriate time and place for a conversation, you can improve the chances for successful communication. Another barrier that might impede the response of the listener is her preconception about you or the topic of the dialogue. If a teacher assistant assumes you have called her into the office because you are going to fire her, that assumption will affect her ability to discuss the immediate problem.

The speaker must take responsibility for making the expected goal known to the listener. In the following example, the director has a specific course of action in mind for the secretary.

Director: "Marcia, we're going to need more emergency forms soon. I think we should add a place for the parent to include the name and phone number of the child's dentist."

Marcia: "That's a good idea."

At this point, it is not clear whether the director expects Marcia to change the forms and have them printed. Perhaps the director just wanted to mention that she was considering the change.

Director: "Will you go ahead and type the revision? I'd like to see it before you take it to the printer. Meanwhile, I'll decide how many you'll need to order."

Now Marcia has a definite picture of the director's expectations. Marcia might ask for more detailed in-

formation before she begins typing, but at least the assignment is understood.

Feedback

The term *feedback* is used in the space program to describe the signals a rocket sends back to Houston control. These signals give the information needed to correct the course of the rocket. In communication, the term *feedback* refers to whether or not the listener understands the speaker's message.

Your attitude as the speaker determines if you receive adequate feedback.

Director: "That's the last time we're going to have playdough outside. No one cleaned up yesterday and the table is a mess!"

There is not likely to be much feedback given because the director has given an order and followed it with an angry accusation. Here is an alternate way to make the same point:

Director: "We need to set some guidelines if we take the playdough outside."

Teacher: "Was there a problem?"

Director: "Yes. The table should be cleaned at the end of the day. The damp air overnight really made a mess."

Teacher: "Let's have the children help clean the table today, and we can talk about how much easier the table is to clean before the playdough gets gooey!"

Giving negative feedback

A manager sometimes wants to change the behavior of a staff member. It's important to see negative feedback as a technique used to seek a specific behavior correction, not to launch a personal attack. You must state clearly the specific change that is needed without being judgmental either in your choice of words or your nonverbal communication. Here are some examples to illustrate the difference:

"You left the lights on when you left last night."

The message is clear and specific. The director has focused on a particular action without making a judgment about the person.

"You're always forgetful!"

Here the director is showing anger without getting across her point about the specific action. The statement does not give the staff member enough information to be able to respond. What has she forgotten? The personal accusation can only make the staff member defensive and angry in return.

In order to be useful, the feedback should be descriptive and concrete.

"I'd like you to start work on time so that the rest of us won't need to cover for you while you're in the bathroom putting on your makeup and combing your hair."

Rather than, "I don't like your attitude!"

Successfully using negative feedback to change behavior involves carefully choosing words that convey a clear and specific message and also choosing an appropriate attitude.

When giving negative feedback, it's important to realize that expressing your desire to see a change in behavior does not guarantee that change will occur. Some people will not change either because they aren't motivated or because they aren't capable of making the change. But you can increase the likelihood of improvement when you make the message clear and palatable.

Nonverbal communication

Behavior, not intention, is the most expressive aspect of communication. Remembering that the listener will not be aware of your intention, only your behavior is an important point. The method of communication is far more eloquent than the words you use. Part of being an effective communicator is being aware of the value of nonverbal communication. Body language, eye contact, and facial expressions are important and reliable indicators of communication. Children learn at a very young age to read these clues and trust their validity. Tone of voice is also a powerful tool. The actual words comprise only a small part of the total communication. It is easy to think of many examples of a conflict between a speaker's words and the expression on her face or the tone of her voice. Which aspect do you believe?

Think about your own body language. Are you aware of frequent gestures, postures, and expressions that reveal what you are thinking? To evaluate your own nonverbal communication you might ask one of your peers to watch you carefully and report back to you. Perhaps you can do the same for her.

Ask family members and longtime friends if they can tell through your nonverbal communication when you are angry, worried, or not paying attention.

Note the body language of others. Quite possibly you speak the same nonverbal language!

Consider what messages you want to convey, and consciously use body language and other nonverbal communication to project your intention.

Active listening

Active listening is a communication method in which statements are "played back" to ensure an understanding of what the speaker is saying. The response should be based on a genuine interest in the other

person. The goal is not merely to keep the other person talking, but to develop a meaningful discussion.

Speaker's statement

"I guess I should have told Mrs. Sanchez about Carlo's bruised leg when she came to pick him up."

Active listening response

"You're feeling as though she would have been less upset if you had told her about it before she saw it."

Less effective response

"Don't ever forget to do that again! It really makes the school look bad!"

* * *

Speaker's statement

"I hope I made enough fruit punch today."

Active listening response

"You're remembering how much the children drank yesterday!"

Less effective response

"Well, if you didn't you'll just have to make more."

By giving the speaker an opportunity to talk about the situation you may keep it from becoming too negative and prevent the oversight from happening again. The active listening response has set the stage for positive growth. The relationship between the staff member and the director after this exchange is also conducive to good communication in the future. The less effective response reinforces the staff member's feelings of failure.

Active listening is a powerful first step toward good communication and is ideal when working with emotional or difficult people. When you paraphrase both the speaker's words and the emotions behind the words, you acknowledge that you understand the speaker. This understanding can dissolve many problems. The role of the active listener is to receive factual information and information about the intensity of emotion. An active listener *listens* rather than expresses an opinion. There is no step-by-step recipe for becoming an active listener. Each person and each conversation will require a unique response. But there are some general principles that you may follow.

1. **Look interested.** Maintaining eye contact is an important part of active listening. When speaking, you might have to break eye contact to gather your thoughts, but a listener who breaks eye contact appears to be disinterested.
2. **Recognize your own biases.** Everyone has a range of reactions to speech patterns and mannerisms. For example, you may dislike the use of profanity, a certain tone of voice, when someone calls you "honey," etc. It is important to recognize any idiosyncrasies that may prevent you from being a responsive listener.
3. **Pay attention.** Paraphrasing the speaker's facts and emotions shows your involvement. Sometimes attentive silence is best; giving the speaker uninterrupted time to say what needs to be said. It may be appropriate to ask questions for clarification, but be careful to avoid asking questions that detract from the speaker's main point. If the speaker has come to you at a particularly bad time and you cannot give her your full attention, consider letting her know that and setting a specific time to converse.
4. **Reduce the level of distractions.** Ideally, you will be alone in a quiet space. If you are in an office, perhaps the phone can be turned off and the door shut momentarily.

Some of the most positive benefits that come from practicing active listening techniques are especially attractive to busy directors who interact with so many people on a regular basis. You will find that when you truly *listen* to people as they are talking, you will remember what they say. It is also easier to associate names with faces when you can recall the conversation.

Summary

We have looked at the basic principles of communication and some simple techniques that can make a difference in your job. Although none of the skills described here is difficult, it takes practice to make each one come naturally. The process of improving your communication skills leads to better relationships with staff and parents. The ability to clearly communicate is invaluable. Do not allow poor communication to lessen your effectiveness as a child care director.

Communication Skills Worksheet

See suggested answers on page 24.

Decide which type of communication, one-way or two-way, would be appropriate in the following instances.

1. **A 2-year-old is running into the path of a tricycle.**

2. **After a parent-teacher conference, a parent asks for a speech therapy referral.**

3. **A new teacher assistant needs to know where the paste is stored.**

4. **You receive a phone call from a parent who is upset about the tuition increase.**

Answers to Communication Skills Worksheet

1. One-way. A direct command to the bike rider or a nearby adult may avert an accident.

2. If you are simply supplying information, the communication would be one-way. However, if you wanted to discuss the parent-teacher conference in detail, then that would be two-way communication.

3. One-way.

4. Two-way. There is a need for clarification and understanding.

Nonverbal Language Worksheet

See suggested answers on page 26.

Here are some examples of nonverbal language for you to interpret:

1. Clenching the jaw.

2. Tapping a foot.

3. Biting the lower lip.

4. Resting the chin on a hand.

What kind of nonverbal communication could you choose to convey the following messages?

a. "You are welcome; come in!"

b. "I think you are important."

c. "It's time to get back to work."

d. "Tell me more!"

Answers to Nonverbal Language Worksheet

These sample answers are designed to help you think about nonverbal communication. There are many possible correct answers.

1. Clenching the jaw can indicate anger or nervous tension.

2. Tapping a foot may indicate anger or excitement, but most often expresses impatience.

3. Along with nail biting and hair twisting, biting the lower lip is one of the most common nervous habits.

4. Getting tired of holding up one's head means you've been sitting still too long, or perhaps you are one step away from a nap!

a. Stepping aside with open or outstretched arms and a pleased facial expression.

b. Attentive facial expression; sitting or standing so that the other person's eye level is equal or above your own. If you are at a desk, turning or stepping away from it so the desk is not a barrier or symbol of authority.

c. Standing up or moving away from the other person. Breaking eye contact . . . if that's too subtle, try looking at your watch.

d. Attentive facial expression and leaning forward.

Active Listening Worksheet

See suggested answers on page 28.

Recognizing the limitations of trying to find *feelings* in the following situations without being able to watch or listen to the speaker, use active listening techniques to respond to these messages.

1. **A parent calls on the phone and says, "Your line has been busy for more than half an hour."**

2. **After a parent-teacher conference, a teacher tells you, "No matter what I say, the Bartons are never going to have Jodie's hearing checked!"**

3. **A new teacher assistant responds to your direction, "I never had to do it like that at my last job."**

4. **You are working intently on tax returns when a teacher comes in and starts to tell you an amusing anecdote about one of the children.**

Answers to Active Listening Worksheet

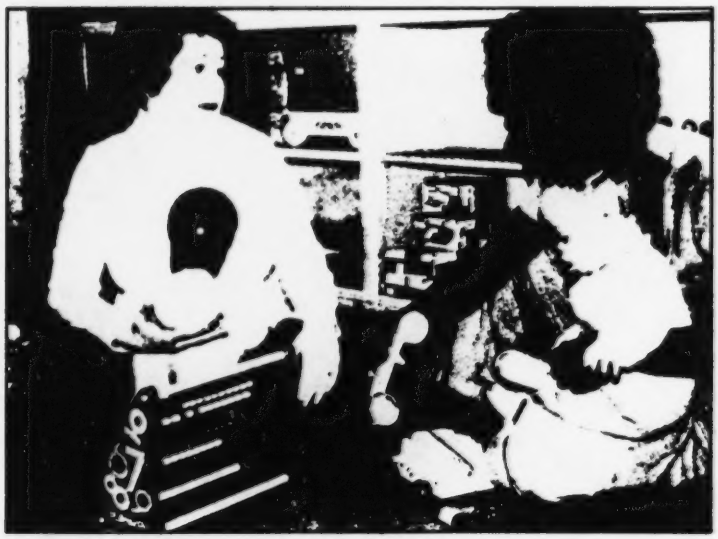
These answers are only examples of one possible way to use active listening techniques. If your answers invite the speaker to continue talking and reflect both the meaning and the feeling of the communication, then your answers are also appropriate.

1. "You really wanted to talk. I'm glad you tried again."

2. "It's very hard to *know* the right thing to do for a child and not be able to do it."

3. "You're surprised that we do things differently here."

4. "Donna, I'd really like to hear this story, but I can't listen right now. I've got to finish this paperwork. Can we have a cup of coffee together later? You can tell me then."



Motivating Staff

Motivating Staff

Motivation: the key to a satisfied staff

I work so that I can afford food, shelter, clothing, and other material things my family needs to live comfortably. I work because my job stimulates me and makes me feel useful.

* * *

I chose a position in the field of early childhood education so that I could watch, and even assist, in the fascinating process of child development.

* * *

My center is convenient to my home, has a sensible philosophy, and has a pleasant environment and good working conditions. I am comfortable in my job and yet it challenges me daily.

Once their basic needs are met, people are motivated to work because of their desire for security, social contact, mental stimulation, and personal satisfaction. These desires help determine the type of work we do and encourage us to improve our skills.

Research on motivation indicates there are several universal reasons that underlie the desire to work. To explain these universal reasons, Maslow (1943) developed a theory called the Hierarchy of Needs. He visualized the hierarchy as a pyramid. The broad base of the pyramid is formed with the basic motivation for action. This motivation is to satisfy physiological needs such as food and water. The next motivation is the need for safety. Once those needs are met, a person will try to satisfy the social need to be close to others, to belong, and to be liked. Above the layer of social needs is the need for esteem, to be recognized and valued as a worker. The final step in the hierarchical pyramid of needs is self-actualization. One way people realize self-actualization is through performing work that is both satisfying and worthwhile.

Enhancing job satisfaction

Drawing upon Maslow's work, Herzberg (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) studied motivation in the 1950s. Herzberg's study has been repeated with similar results. He found there are key factors that enhance job satisfaction. Each factor relates to professional growth. Herzberg calls these motivation factors *satisfiers*. They include a feeling of accomplishment, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement.

1. **Feeling a sense of accomplishment**

That wonderful, self-satisfied feeling that comes with the completion of a particularly difficult, tedious, or time-consuming task can help you appreciate the months (or years!) of coping with a problem and finding a solution. Seeing the results of your efforts increases your job satisfaction.

For example,

The board of directors requires a summary report that describes in detail the curriculum, staffing, budgeting, and activities for the year. When the report is finally completed and ready to be submitted, the director can feel proud of a job well done.

* * *

Marianne has been afraid of the slide since she first came to the center 3 months ago. For a long time all she could do was stand near the base of the slide and watch the other children come down. Last week, her teacher Joan helped her climb to the top of the ladder and look down the slide. Today Joan held Marianne's waist while she came down the slide. Before long Marianne will want to come down by herself. Both Marianne and Joan are experiencing a sense of accomplishment!

2. **Receiving recognition**

Being noticed or praised by a supervisor, peer, client, or the general public increases your job satisfaction by enhancing your self-esteem.

For example,

Ferdie has been having temper tantrums. Delilah receives a note from Ferdie's mother thanking Delilah for being so patient with Ferdie during this difficult time. Ferdie's mother explained that she handled the situation calmly because of Delilah's guidance.

* * *

When Rainbow Day School launched balloons to celebrate the Week of the Young Child, the local newspaper took pictures and ran a short article. The director made a point of telling the reporter that a teacher, Susan Halstead, had arranged the event. Susan Halstead was given credit in the article and later received notes and telephone calls from parents and friends complimenting her on a job well done.

3. **Finding work challenging and creative**

Job satisfaction is usually increased through challenging and creative work.

Each child caregiver has her own private list of children that she remembers best. For most of you, that list is comprised of the children who presented the greatest challenges or who made the most progress under your care.

You may remember the shy child who finally made a friend; the angry child who learned to express and control her anger; the child who never wanted to get dirty but learned to enjoy fingerpainting; and the crier who eventually became nonchalant about his mother leaving.

4. **Assuming responsibility**

As a competent employee, being asked to handle a new responsibility will increase your job satisfaction. Whether you were asked to work unsupervised or you are given a task to complete on your own—knowing that your ability is trusted, is satisfying.

For example,

The director noticed that Carla carefully rearranged the dolls and dress-up clothes each afternoon before she went home. Although it was not part of her job, Carla made sure these things were kept clean and in good repair. The director gave Carla an allowance and asked her to refurbish the dramatic play center.

* * *

At the staff meeting, David suggested that the center have a farm unit during the month of November. Other staff were very enthusiastic! The director asked David to list activities that would be appropriate for the farm unit. At the next meeting, David brought in a recipe for vegetable soup, a picture of a scarecrow they could build, and a stack of books about farms he had found at the library. He had also called the local 4-H and arranged for a different farm animal to be brought to the center each week.

5. **Advancing and earning promotions**

Promotions are seen as rewards. You may seek a position with added responsibility that offers an opportunity for advancement and that also includes increased status and better pay. In some centers the position of head teacher, assistant director, or director is the "reward" for excellent job performance and loyalty. In other centers the organizational structure does not allow for a formal promotion with increased status, but you may be compensated with a higher salary based on merit or seniority.

Implications for directors

Herzberg found that when these satisfiers are present and a positive attitude about the work exists, the job performance improves. Motivation creates an upward spiral of good performance that is reinforced by more satisfiers that lead to better performance. Herzberg also found that with increased job satisfaction and motivation, job turnover is less likely to occur. This is a particularly important point for the directors of child care centers to remember. The profession has a high rate of turnover. Because increased performance and lower job turnover are goals for directors, you must increase job satisfaction. Herzberg's study has yet another message for directors. He found that several other factors were not mentioned as significant satisfiers, but became significant if they were absent or not acceptable. Therefore, because the *dissatisfiers* are capable of undermining job satisfaction, you need to be aware of them as well. Dissatisfying factors include policies, supervision, salary, and working conditions.

1. **Policies and administration**

Herzberg found that when the management or administrative structure is viewed by the employee as inefficient, ineffective, or unfair, the employee's morale is reduced. The worker wants to feel that her efforts are matched by the efforts of others and that the overall result is worthwhile. It is demoralizing, for example, for a teacher to explain to a parent that there is a late fee if she picks up her child after 6:00 p.m., only to have the school administrator tell the same parent not to worry about being late.

2. **Supervision**

If an employee sees her supervisor as unfair or incompetent, it affects her attitude toward her job. An employee will find her work less satisfying if she believes the supervisor is unfriendly, dishonest, rigid, or unappreciative. In this situation the employee's *perception* is significant—not the accuracy of the perception!

3. **Salary**

When salary increases do not occur or if they are not large enough, the employee feels resentful. The employee may feel there is an unfair discrepancy between

the salaries of different staff. For example, if the starting pay of a new employee equals that of an employee who has been in the job for some time, the experienced employee will be dissatisfied. Employees need to understand the salary structure and believe it is justified.

4. Working conditions

An employee's attitude toward her work is adversely affected if the physical environment is unsuitable. Inadequate lighting and ventilation can have a negative impact on a teacher. Some centers expect the staff to operate with a very small selection of play equipment or inadequate supplies. The daily routine may include a difficult period of supervising children on a hazardous or inappropriate playground.

An employee's attitude is also affected by her work load. Having to supervise too many children can make a child care worker feel that she can do little more than prevent disasters. It's nearly impossible to teach when your eyes must be constantly scanning a crowded room. However, it is just as demoralizing to have *too little* work to do as too much. In lab schools or other situations where the ratio of teachers to children is kept quite high, staff have a tendency to try to look busy while feeling unimportant.

As a director, it is your responsibility to provide as many satisfiers and eliminate as many dissatisfiers as possible. Let's look at some ways this can be accomplished.

Match the right employee with the right job. When the director does a skillful job of interviewing and hiring, she helps ensure job satisfaction for that particular employee. Not only must the new employee understand the job description, but the director must have a clear picture of the type of person who will do well in that particular job.

Describe the system. As the director orients a new employee to the center's philosophy, guidelines, and policies, the employee understands the focus and structure of the center. The director who is consistent in her expectations and responses will help the new staff member develop a sense of trust and security.

Define expectations. Each staff member must be aware of her role. The director should help the employee see the particular responsibilities and challenges of her role and encourage realistic goal setting for that individual. Offering encouragement and recognizing progress are two ways the director can help instill a sense of purpose in the employee.

Create a supportive climate. The director who views individual differences among the staff as a valuable resource for the center will help each employee feel appreciated. Regular and frequent evaluations and opportunities for self-assessment will reaffirm the employee's strengths and acknowledge her performance. Areas of weakness are corrected more easily if they are discussed frequently. Encourage each staff member to retain her sense of identity.

Many of you started your career by helping young children feel good about themselves. Adults, too, need high self-esteem and motivation to lead productive lives.

Both motivation and high self-esteem are critical to the employee. A strongly motivated individual has high self-esteem, and an individual who feels good about herself and her work is strongly motivated!

Developing high self-esteem in child care workers *is* challenging. Many staff members are underpaid and undervalued in their community. Staff motivation is dependent, to a large extent, on the director's ability to make each staff member feel she is making a valuable contribution to the center.

Build staff cohesiveness. Having a sense of pride in your profession and in your center helps create a bond among staff members. Providing in-service workshops on topics that are of interest to the staff is one way to increase a sense of professionalism. Staff social events such as potluck meals or breakfast meetings help establish and strengthen relationships among staff members. There should be opportunities for networking about similar problems or areas of interest. Networking is enhanced when staff are given time and space (and permission!) for conversation. The director may need to initiate, for example, a conversation between the teacher assistant who has a child with dyslexia and the teacher who suspects a child in her class may have a disability. Once the director suggests this link, it can easily become a source of mutual support. Each staff member wants to feel good about the services the center provides. If the director speaks with pride about the accomplishments of one individual, the entire staff can share that pride. Your staff needs to feel they are part of a team effort and that the team is making a significant contribution!

Provide support. A director can provide support through recognition and financial reward. She should also provide staff members with feedback and emotional support. Sometimes the director is in a unique position to understand the teacher's difficulties with a certain parent or classroom situation. That understanding needs to be voiced! The director, through her examples and observations, can encourage personal and professional growth and can enhance a staff member's competence.

Each director can help her staff members find the professional resources they need. Posting notices about community events and workshops, maintaining a staff library, and facilitating networking with other child care professionals are ways in which a director can provide professional support to the staff.

Capitalizing on creative incentives

Directors cannot always recognize and reward good performances and attitudes with salary increases. Many center directors are restricted by a budget or center policy concerning pay increases and cannot provide raises to deserving staff members. There are other ways (often more valuable than a raise!) to reward an employee.

Bonuses. A one-time bonus worked into the budget and specifically labeled as an appreciation for a task well done, demonstrates that the director appreciates the staff member's effort.

Personal time. Some directors can provide time off for staff to visit their own child's school, go to the dentist, or schedule personal appointments. This time off can boost an employee's morale if she is finding it hard to meet her daily responsibilities at home.

Children's thank you. Perhaps the most touching reward for a special effort is for the children to draw a mural for that staff member.

Use of facility or equipment. It doesn't always occur to a director that staff members might appreciate the use of the building for an evening or weekend event. Sometimes a family gathering or scout troop needs the large space available in a child care center. By following some simple safety precautions, guidelines, and check-out procedures, employees should be able to borrow center equipment for personal use. For example, a clown suit, a tumbling mat, a folk dance record, or a projector could be available to employees.

Because motivation is such a powerful and positive tool, it is not only effective but *exciting!* Motivation can also be contagious! As you begin to use these principles and techniques, you will find that the center benefits from the increased enthusiasm and performance of the staff. The children and families that you serve will reap the fruits of your efforts. Of course, staff members will be more satisfied in their work and their lives. Don't be surprised if your own attitude changes too. Highly motivated staff are usually guided by a highly motivated director!

References

Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. (1959). *The motivation to work*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Maslow, A. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 370–396.

Conducting Effective Staff Meetings

Introduction

When child care directors hold frequent and effective staff meetings, staff are more likely to have greater job satisfaction, stay longer at their jobs, and be more productive workers. Most teachers of young children acknowledge that the rewards of working in the field of early childhood education are not monetary, but come from enjoying and helping children grow and develop. Another source of job satisfaction often cited by teachers is working in an environment where their opinions are valued and they can work cooperatively with others. Staff meetings are one means of fostering camaraderie and a sense of belonging to the organization and of providing time for sharing information.

An effective staff meeting is planned in advance to make the best use of limited time. The role of the director is to prepare for the meeting, considering current issues relevant to staff, and facilitate interactions among staff members during the meeting. One goal of all staff meetings should be to provide an atmosphere of open communication to encourage feedback and questions on topics of discussion. When a director solicits input from staff on matters that directly affect them, she ensures greater support for those ideas. Providing staff the opportunity to influence decisions in the center builds an overall sense of mutual accomplishment and contributes to team building.

Staff who feel valued and a part of your center display "pride of ownership" in their job performance. This translates to better care for children. When teachers have a positive self-image, they provide positive role models for children.

Conducting effective staff meetings is an acquired skill. A director who understands the benefits of staff meetings will schedule them frequently and find ways to make them productive. Following are some suggestions to facilitate this process.

When to have a meeting

Why are you having a staff meeting? Because it is the second Tuesday of the month? Because you haven't had one lately? Because you want the staff to know how hard you've been working on organizing parent's night? Sometimes we schedule meetings for the wrong reasons, and the meeting is doomed to failure before it begins. The best way to decide whether to have a meeting is to ask yourself

Is the issue important?
Do we have all of the information we need to discuss this issue?
Is a subject appropriate for discussion with this group?
Has a decision already been made about this issue?
Will the group become too angry or hostile to be effective?
Could the issue be handled more efficiently without using group time?

Examining your motives will help you avoid a meeting that wastes the participants' time and doesn't accomplish your objective.

The purpose of a meeting

Staff meetings may be called for several reasons. **A staff meeting can be a forum for planning.** The staff can brainstorm on the need for a new playground project or plan curriculum units for the month. A good meeting is designed to motivate its participants in the same place and at the same time so that each person can contribute ideas and hear the suggestions of others.

A staff meeting can solve problems. If there is a problem that involves the entire staff, a meeting can

give everyone a chance to air her opinion. By brainstorming, the group may reach an agreement about the best solution.

A staff meeting can provide information. Individual staff members may have information to share with the group. Committees may report to the staff on a particular topic. A speaker may come to the meeting as an expert on a subject of interest to the staff.

Setting the stage

Once you have decided to have a meeting, there are a number of factors that will help the meeting be more effective and satisfying.

Allow enough time. A staff meeting that takes place during naptime and cannot continue longer than 1 hour is forced to have a very different agenda and process than a staff meeting that is scheduled for 7:00 p.m.

Choose the right setting. There should be comfortable seating for everyone, good visibility and lighting, and adequate heat and ventilation so that none of these factors interferes with the meeting.

The agenda

It may not have occurred to you to create a formal agenda, especially if you have a small staff. But an agenda can be an important tool in encouraging group participation and keeping the objectives of the meeting clear. It allows participants to form expectations and structures the meeting. Usually, it is helpful to have the staff decide what the agenda will be. If the director determines the agenda, she should let her staff know in advance. If she can determine how much interest there is in each item, then she can project how long the discussion will take. Each meeting can end with listing agenda items for the next meeting. There can be a central place in the center for staff to write down suggested topics for discussion or staff can give them to the director before the next meeting. The announcement for a meeting and the deadline for agenda items might look like this

Staff Meeting
Friday, April 12
3:00 p.m.
Agenda item deadline: Tuesday, April 9

At the beginning of a meeting the leader can ask for additions to the agenda. When you do not want input because you have a very full agenda of urgent business to discuss, let staff know that although there will not be additions to the agenda for this meeting, you will take suggestions for an upcoming meeting.

Don't feel that once you have asked for input that you are obligated to put every suggestion on the agenda. Some topics of concern to staff may be addressed in ways other than a staff meeting. For example, if Carla wants to discuss natural food snacks, you might arrange a separate meeting with Carla, the cook, and yourself, rather than involving all staff in the discussion.

Alerting your staff to the agenda will encourage participation in the discussion. Type it and make a copy for each participant. A printed agenda is especially helpful if there are many items. It gives the staff a chance to see when a particular comment would be appropriate. Comments and questions can be noted on the printed agenda.

Organizing the agenda

In writing an agenda, there are some tricks that will help create a well-paced and effective meeting. For example, Gloria, a director, has received input for the agenda and knows that the subject of displays for Parents' Night is a controversial item. There is conflict among the staff members about what should be displayed. So Gloria writes this agenda:

Parents' Night
1. Displays
2. Refreshments
3. Publicity
4. Set-up and clean-up

Announcements
1. Karen—car pools for conferences
2. Joanne—reimbursement procedures

Fundraising ideas

Replacing the water table

The problem with this agenda is that the other items may never be discussed because so much of the meeting is going to be spent on the display controversy. *Or,* if the discussion about that item becomes heated, these emotions may color the response of the group for the rest of the meeting.

There is an effective way to organize this agenda. Gloria does need to list all the items for discussion. She must make the list complete. "Forgetting" to list an agenda item and then adding it on the spot defeats the purpose of the announced agenda. Let's say that Gloria has listed the following items:

car pools for conferences
reimbursement procedures
Parents' Night
replacing the water table
fundraising ideas

Gloria rewrites her agenda this way:

Announcements
1. Karen—Car pools for conference
2. Joanne—Reimbursement procedure

Parents' Night
1. Refreshments
2. Publicity
3. Set-up and clean-up
4. Displays

Break

Discussion items
1. Fundraising ideas
2. Mandy—Replacing the water table

This agenda could be made more useful by allotting time and describing the group's goal for each item.

The meeting can begin with announcements. These are non-controversial items. This part of the agenda is *information giving*. If an announcement unexpectedly sparks a discussion, that item should be tabled and scheduled on the next meeting's agenda as a discussion item.

Next on the agenda are the less controversial items. Because Parents' Night is coming soon, all questions concerning that event will be answered at this meeting. Gloria is not aware of any controversy about publicity, refreshments, or set-up and clean-up committees, so she schedule those items for this portion of the agenda. Having dealt with several decisions rather quickly puts the group in a good frame of mind for dealing with the more difficult issue.

The most difficult item should come in the middle of the meeting. Gloria should schedule the decision on displays here.

After considering the most difficult item, a brief break is appropriate. The break needs to last only a few minutes to be effective.

The last part of the meeting is devoted to discussion-only items. These are issues that will not be decided upon at this meeting. This is an excellent way to end a meeting if tension has built up during the earlier discussions. Contributing input on issues that will be discussed in more depth and decided upon at the next meeting helps staff focus their thinking. The decision-making process at the next meeting will be improved by this initial discussion.

The leadership role

Each meeting needs a leader. As director, you may feel that this role is rightfully yours at a staff meeting. Or, you may feel the staff member most directly involved with the issue should act as leader. But whoever assumes the leadership role is responsible for facilitating an effective meeting.

1. **Have clear intentions.** Decide what objectives you have for the meeting. Are you announcing information, brainstorming solutions to a problem, or asking for the group to make a decision? Part of the leader's responsibilities is to ensure there is no "hidden agenda." If one of your objectives is to tell the staff that art materials are being wasted through careless supervision, it is unfair not to include this item on the agenda.

2. **Present your intentions.** You need to prepare a written agenda that specifies information-giving, information-gathering, discussion, and decision items so that the staff understand your objectives.

3. **Communicate expected results.** If you expect any specific results from the meeting, e.g., to form a committee of three staff members to prepare refreshments for Parents' Night, inform the group of your expectations.

4. **Seek agreement on the meeting's content and process.** If some staff are concerned about the amount of time allowed for discussion, or if an announcement should be listed as a discussion item, those concerns can undermine the effectiveness of the meeting.

5. **Encourage participation.** The leader can keep a discussion from becoming one-sided by asking participants for input or by inquiring if clarification is needed. Brainstorming is useful when you want to encourage participation on an information-gathering item. (See the section "Solving Problems and Managing Change.") If the leader anticipates a problem with group participation, she can ask certain members to contribute information on specific items during the meeting. Gloria may have asked Mandy to research some of the different styles of water tables. Gloria might ask each staff member to bring a few suggestions for fundraising.

6. **Keep the process in motion.** If the discussion is exceeding the allotted time or if someone is conducting a monologue or making personal attacks, the leader needs to acknowledge the importance of hearing everyone's opinion, then remind the group of its objectives. It may be necessary to ask, "Excuse me, I don't see how that relates to this agenda item." Or, if the group has reached a stalemate, the leader may need to table the discussion until another time.

7. **Summarize decisions.** Periodically throughout a long meeting, the leader should paraphrase the work that has been completed. This helps the group focus on the flow of the meeting.

8. **Set guidelines for follow-up.** If the group makes a decision, the leader's role is to clarify *how* it will happen, *by whom*, and *when*.

9. **Encourage evaluation of the meeting.** After the meeting, the leader can informally ask each staff member how she feels about the session. A written evaluation sheet might be used. All group members should feel comfortable suggesting changes in the process or content of future meetings. The gauge of whether a meeting is effective or not is its level of productivity and whether it served the needs of *all* staff members.

Effective Staff Meetings Worksheet

See suggested answers on page 37.

Below are some obstacles that can prevent a meeting from being effective. As you read each problem, decide whether the solution would be

a. more careful writing of the agenda
b. better leadership at the meeting
c. improved group dynamics (e.g., brainstorming)
d. tabling items until next meeting

Problems

1. The group is discussing changing the center's closing time. One member mentions overtime and soon the entire discussion is about benefits being paid.

2. An announcement sparks a heated discussion.

3. One person is dominating the discussion and other staff members are not expressing their opinions.

4. The time allotted for the meeting is over and the group is only on item three of a five-item agenda.

5. The leader is doing all of the talking.

6. Many people in the group are expressing opinions, but the discussion is not leading to a resolution.

7. Two vocal members of the group are doing most of the talking. A third staff member looks as if she would like to say something, but is hesitant.

8. The attitude of the group seems to be, "It's terrible, but we can't do anything about it, so why try?"

9. One staff member feels offended by the comment of another staff member.

10. The group has decided what needs to be done, but no one has taken the responsibility for follow-up.

11. The group is discussing an important issue, but several people look bored and are wriggling in their chairs.

12. An item was listed on the agenda for a decision, but someone brings up a relevant question that no one in the group can answer.

Answers to Effective Staff Meetings Worksheet

1. (b) The leader needs to keep the group to the topic. She can suggest that the benefits discussion be given a place on the next agenda.

2. (a) or (d) If the leader anticipated the problem, the item should have been listed on the agenda for discussion. If the controversy was not anticipated, the leader can suggest that the item be listed on the next agenda for discussion.

3. (c) Techniques that encourage participation by everyone in the group will solve this problem. For example, the leader may go around the room and give each person the opportunity to comment on the issue.

4. (a) and (b) This is a case of either underestimating the time allotted for each item, or having the leader allow the group to stray from the topic.

5. (b) and (c) Either intentionally or unintentionally, the leader has given the message that she does not want group participation.

6. (b) The process is not being kept in motion.

7. (b) or (c) It might be appropriate to ask the third staff member's opinion directly, or to go around the room and let each person comment on the issue.

8. (c) Using brainstorming to generate a list of options may give the group a more positive outlook.

9. (b) Keeping the discussion to the issue without allowing personal attacks is part of the leader's responsibility.

10. (b) The leader must see that follow-up guidelines are clear.

11. (a) It's important to schedule a break, even a brief one, before an important issue is discussed.

12. (d) Without having all the relevant facts, the group cannot make a good decision.

Evaluating Staff

A model for staff evaluation

If you think staff evaluation means issuing a report card, it's time to take a closer look at the responsibilities the director has toward each staff member. The director is primarily a motivator. The director encourages good performance from her staff. The director is a supporter. Because she is aware of her employees' goals and the problems that make those goals difficult to achieve, the director helps her employees and acknowledges their accomplishments. The director's evaluation of a staff member is another way to motivate and support the employee. The director wants the employee to succeed and to develop. Evaluation is a tool of staff development.

To reduce the tension involved with evaluation, try to view an evaluation as another form of feedback. If basic trust and good communication exist between the director and the staff member, specific feedback is available on a day-to-day basis. The evaluation then becomes an opportunity to expand the feedback process.

The process of staff development

Briefly, we can break staff development into six steps.

1. **The job description:** Clearly stating the tasks expected of an employee, the line of authority, standards of performance, and other relevant information about the job gives the employee a basis for understanding the expectations of the employer.

2. **Careful hiring:** Matching the right individual to the job is critical. No amount of "staff development" is going to make up for a mistake at this point. Personal traits compatible with the rest of the staff are as important as other qualifications for the job. Some directors like to involve the staff in the hiring of new members to build a sense of community and give each staff member a vested interest in the new employee's success.

3. **Orientation:** Each new staff member needs to be given some time at the beginning of her employment to discuss policies and procedures, to ask questions, and to feel supported by the director. Allotting time for this orientation can prevent a number of future problems.

4. **Evaluation:** Although there will be day-to-day feedback, formal evaluations will be needed periodically to give both the employee and the director a chance to comment on behavior and performance.

5. **Goal setting:** The purpose of evaluation is to establish goals to improve performance and job satisfaction.

6. **Re-evaluation:** Once goals are set, take time to re-evaluate them and determine whether they have been met. Goals should be specific and easily measured.

This outline of the process of staff development demonstrates how evaluation helps the director fulfill her primary functions as a manager: to motivate and support staff.

Evaluation as a tool

In some programs formal evaluation will be the basis for pay increases or contract negotiations. A poor evaluation might be one step toward firing. In all programs, evaluation can serve as a tool for acknowledging individual performance and creating a dialogue about each staff member's professional growth.

Formal evaluations

The job description lists specific and measurable elements of the job to be used in the evaluation. If a director wants to involve her staff in the evaluation process, she might ask the staff as a whole, or a staff committee, to review the job descriptions and include or delete important points. The list of measurable points that result from this process are the performance standards that are used for evaluation.

Setting performance standards

The criteria gleaned from the job description may be used to create an evaluation form that allows each criterion to be measured. The evaluation form should be given to new employees as part of their orientation, along with an explanation of how and when it will be used. A director can solicit staff input during the creation or revision of the evaluation form. A sample evaluation form appears on page 41.

Gathering data

Ask the employee to evaluate herself using the evaluation form. The director will also rate the employee using the same form. The benefits of self-evaluation should be emphasized. Not only does it help the individual analyze the many elements of her job and improve her performance, it is also a necessary part of the development process.

Conducting an evaluation conference

Using the director's and the employee's completed evaluation forms, the director and employee can discuss points of agreement and disparity. The conference will be a success if both parties are open and candid. Establishing a climate of trust and understanding on a daily basis is the key to promoting open communication in situations such as an evaluation conference. Remember the importance of letting an employee know she is valued and appreciated for her contributions to the center! Even your most self-assured and least egotistical employee wants to be praised!

Developing a plan of action

The result of the evaluation conference will be to develop a plan of action. The plan should reflect the performance, development, and career objectives of the individual staff member. An employee may still need to work within the standards of performance of the job, or she may be at a point where she needs to stretch toward new goals within the profession. The director can help develop the plan and encourage its implementation.

Measuring progress

Once the plan of action is developed, the director and the employee will have ongoing dialogues about progress toward the goals. This follow-up of the evaluation gives the employee the kind of feedback she needs to continue to improve her job performance. This follow-up ensures that the employee does not view the evaluation as a "report card" to be forgotten until it is time for the next one!

Let's look at an example.

At the Crestleigh Child Care Center, a head teacher is expected to meet the following job description:

Title: Head teacher

Hours: 5:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Responsibilities:

1. Open the building each morning.
2. Assume responsibility for the operation of Crestleigh Child Care Center in the director's absence.
3. Plan and execute appropriate activities for the children each day in art, music, language, and motor development.
4. Plan and execute appropriate activities for the children each week in science, math, and multicultural experiences.
5. Observe and evaluate each child's progress and provide a written report to the director and parents at least twice during the year (January and May).
6. Work cooperatively with fellow staff members and parents.
7. Be available for parent conferences when necessary.
8. Attend monthly staff meetings and parent functions.
9. Notify the director in the event of absence.

Using this job description, the director (perhaps with a staff committee) has defined the tasks in specific and measurable criteria.

1. Be punctual in opening the building.
2. Be available to parents in the absence of the director.
3. Be available to other staff in the absence of the director.
4. Be in charge of an emergency in the absence of the director.
5. Plan and execute daily activities in art, music, language development, and motor development.
6. Plan and execute daily/weekly activities in science, math, and multicultural experiences.
7. Observe and keep notes on children at least weekly.
8. Provide a written evaluation to the director and parents each January and May.
9. Let parents know when conferences are available.
10. Talk to parents if there is a problem.
11. Attend all staff meetings.
12. Attend Parents' Night and Open House.
13. Call the director in the event of absence.

Based on these criteria, the director made an evaluation form. The director also added some items to the evaluation form that related to the general philosophy of the school and the atmosphere she attempts to create.

Crestleigh Child Care Center
Evaluation Form for Head Teacher

A = Always U = Usually S = Sometimes N = Never

1. I open the building promptly at 5:30 a.m. ____
2. Parents can talk to me in the director's absence. ____
3. Staff can talk to me in the director's absence. ____
4. I am in charge in the director's absence. ____
5. I take whatever action is necessary in the director's absence. ____
6. The children in my group have art available 5 days a week. ____
7. The children in my group have music 5 days a week. ____
8. The children in my group have language development activities 5 days a week. ____
9. The children in my group have motor development activities 5 days a week. ____
10. The children in my group have a science activity available once a week. ____
11. The children in my group have a math readiness activity available once a week. ____
12. The children in my group have a multicultural activity available once a week. ____
13. I make observation notes on each child in my group at least once a week. ____
14. I write a report on each child in my group in January and in May. ____

Parents know I am available for conferences:

Days and hours _____

15. I call parents when I am concerned about their child. ____
16. I attend staff meetings. ____
17. I attend Parents' Night and Open House. ____
18. I let the director know when I will be absent. ____
19. I keep the director informed of concerns I have about the children in my group. ____
20. I am courteous, friendly, and cooperative with other staff. ____
21. I am courteous, friendly, and cooperative with parents. ____
22. I treat the children with respect. ____

The director met with the head teacher and explained that the evaluation form was going to serve as a tool for discussion. She gave a copy of the evaluation form to the head teacher and set up a time for them to confer. Because the director did not want their discussion interrupted, she asked the teacher out to lunch one day the following week.

The head teacher evaluated her own performance on each item on the form. During the week the director also evaluated the teacher. The director made observation notes during the past months and also referred to records concerning parent conferences and attendance at school functions. When the director and teacher met for lunch, they compared their evaluation forms and found that they agreed on most items. The teacher reported that she did not offer motor development activities on a daily basis, did not make observation notes every week, and had not attended all staff meetings. The director was concerned about two parents who had complained about not knowing who was in charge when the director was not available.

The director and teacher discussed each item and came up with a workable plan. The teacher felt that the children in her group did not need motor development activities planned for them because they were so active. She also admitted to not feeling comfortable about her own knowledge in this area. The director suggested two publications that were well-illustrated and specifically geared to the age level. The teacher felt that her observation notes were mainly about problems and some weeks there were no new problems to record. The director pointed out the usefulness of observation notes in recalling the progress a child makes in all areas of development.

"Tuesday, Mark used scissors without help."

"Jaime learned to pump himself on the swing this week."

"Dori did not suck her thumb during the story today."

The teacher was apologetic about missing three staff meetings, but reminded the director that the meetings she had missed were held on Fridays. Friday was her day to drive her daughter's car pool, and she needed to leave work promptly at 1:00. She suggested that if she had the staff meeting schedule farther in advance she could probably arrange to trade car pool days. The director agreed. The teacher was surprised to hear that two parents didn't know she was in charge during the director's absence. She reminded the director that it had been mentioned to the parents at orientation and in the newsletter at the beginning of the year. The director and teacher decided to put it in the newsletter again. They also decided to put a sign on the door of the office whenever the director was out, reminding parents that the head teacher was available to help them.

This was the plan of action:

1. Read the two motor development books and report back to the director with some specific ideas within 3 weeks.
2. Keep observation notes that reflect progress and changes in behavior, as well as problems. Show the director those notes at the end of the week for the next 2 weeks.
3. Make and display an attractive, eye-catching sign for parents announcing when the head teacher is in charge.

Although this completes the formal evaluation, the director will have a chance to continue the discussion and encourage improved performance when she looks at the observation notes. When the director and teacher meet again to discuss the motor development books, the director will determine whether the teacher has been motivated to pay more attention to this area of the curriculum or whether she needs to try something else.

Remember that the discussion was a two-way conversation and the evaluation allowed the head teacher an opportunity to express her thinking. The director was able to respond to the teacher's problem by giving her a staff meeting schedule.

The evaluation of another staff member might have an entirely different outcome. Suppose very few items on the checklist were met. Or suppose the director and the employee did not agree on the ratings for several items. The director's approach to the evaluation conference might include spelling out the consequences of not improving performance on those items within a specified time. The plan of action might have many more elements, and the dialogue concerning progress might continue several weeks. Perhaps the director and the employee would agree to another evaluation. In any case, both the employee and the director should keep a copy of the plan of action.

Suppose an employee has met each item on the evaluation form. How can a director use the evaluation to motivate and support an employee who is performing at a high level?

Setting long-range goals

While the plan of action discussed above sets some specific goals for improving job performance, a director can also use the evaluation to discuss career goals with a highly motivated employee. What kinds of career goals might an employee have? A teacher assistant may aspire to be a teacher. A teacher might want to be a head teacher or a director. Or she might want to continue teaching, but obtain advanced training in one aspect of child development such as language development or learning disabilities. Why would a director want to encourage a career change in a good employee? If the atmosphere you want to promote at your center is one of professional growth and support, it is important to accept the fact that most employees will stay in a job only as long as they find the work satisfying and rewarding. If an employee is ambitious, by offering encouragement the director can foster the professional growth of that individual and can demonstrate her commitment to staff development.

The evaluation form should also include open-ended questions that encourage the employee to express her thoughts.

Here are some sample questions that might be included on an evaluation form that encourages long-range goals:

1. What aspects of your job give you the most personal satisfaction?
2. What aspects of your job give you the least personal satisfaction?
3. What would you like to be doing five years from now? Ten years from now?
4. Are there particular areas of study or training that you would like to pursue?
5. What is your greatest strength in your job performance?
6. What is your greatest weakness in your job performance?
7. What changes, large or small, would you like to see made in the program or operation of the center?

Ask the employee to answer all questions as completely as possible and to sign and date the form. When the director meets with the employee, there will be enough information to have a useful conversation culminating in establishing some long-range goals. Their discussion will include not only objectives, but specific ways to implement them and a timeline.

Program evaluations

Not only staff, but the program as a whole, should be evaluated. As consumers, parents are the most valuable source for evaluating how well the program is serving its clients. Many centers find it useful to ask parents to fill out a questionnaire about the program and the staff. This tool focuses on ways to improve communication with parents and points out specific problems in the operation of the center. It can be an effective way to underline the things staff are doing well!

If the questionnaire is distributed and collected in such a way that the parents remain anonymous, the results will be more reliable. Encourage comments beyond the items on the questionnaire. To ensure that a high percentage of the questionnaires are returned, send home reminders or post notices. Be sure to have copies available in the language most familiar to the parents.

When designing the questionnaire, ask the staff to contribute questions most useful to them. Here are some possible questions:

1. Are you aware of the center's newsletter?
2. Do you read notices on the bulletin board?
3. Are you pleased with the menus offered at the center?
4. Have you ever called the center to report a problem? If so, how was the problem handled?
5. Do you attend parent meetings? If not, why not?
6. Are you satisfied with the center's personnel?
7. Is your child happy at the center?
8. Why did you choose this center?

You might decide to conduct several parent evaluations during the year. Keep them brief and focus on one or two issues each time. You might want to send questionnaires to a particular segment of the parent population, such as the parents of infants or the parents of full-day care children.

Developing your own staff and parent evaluation tools can be time consuming. Consider adapting or using existing forms such as those developed by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a division of NAEYC. Centers seeking accreditation through the Academy receive self-study materials which include comprehensive staff and parent questionnaires along with other materials for program evaluation.

Solving Problems and Managing Change

Team building

Imagine what it would be like to have the ideal staff. Each person is committed to doing the best job possible. Everyone is considering the needs of children, parents, and each other. What impact would that kind of staff have on your center? On your job as a director? How far removed is your staff from that ideal?

All too often the atmosphere of the center is clouded by petty complaints and jealousies that crop up among staff. The team attitude erodes when staff work with one eye on the clock. The director encounters resistance when she suggests staff members meet to discuss a problem. They seem to want her to carry the weight and make the decision, while they reserve the right to complain if the decision is a mistake!

So the director becomes a "cheerleader." She may plan a staff party or offer to pay everyone's way to a conference, only to find no one shows up! These behavior patterns wear down the director and make her wonder why the staff members don't function as a team.

It's time to consider the fine art of team building!

What makes a staff a team?

In any group situation the key to a successful team is the realization by each member of the group that the common purpose or goal is more important than any one individual's aims. The first priority of the group manager is to reaffirm the commitment to achieve this goal.

A successful team flourishes in an atmosphere of open communication. The child care director needs to foster an atmosphere where opinions and questions are valued and where it is understood if mistakes are sometimes made.

Each member of the team needs a clearly defined role. Each member needs to recognize and appreciate the role of each other member.

If a staff has these three elements: a commitment to a common goal, an atmosphere with open communication, and clearly defined roles; the staff will function as a team!

Commitment to a common goal

Every director cherishes the staff member who takes initiative in making the center function smoothly. The teacher who begins work on time and communicates regularly with parents is often the same teacher who promotes harmony among the staff and attends workshops that are relevant to her job. Here is an employee who is dependable, conscientious, and dedicated. Every director wonders how she can inspire other staff members to follow this behavior.

If the center has a philosophy that is clearly stated in the parent handbook, introductory brochure, staff handbook, and other appropriate places, then this philosophy can serve as a starting point to increase staff commitment. If staff agree in principle with the philosophy of the center, then the director needs to address any differing views about how the philosophy is put into effect. Using the center's written statement of philosophy, a list of specific goals can be formulated that is the basis for all center activities. No member of the staff should feel uncomfortable with either the basic philosophy or the methods of implementation. It is simply not realistic to expect someone to work toward goals incompatible with her own. The director must be sure that the goals and objectives are not only clearly stated and understood by staff members, but also wholeheartedly supported!

A director is accustomed to looking at the center's

activities from an overall perspective. She may forget that a staff member feels overly burdened or has trouble seeing the importance of a specific task. During these instances, it might be helpful to point out the link between that task and a basic goal.

For example, in one center the custodian was repeatedly reminded to thoroughly mop floors and wash walls in the toilet areas each night, but often the job was not performed satisfactorily. The custodian saw the job as time consuming and felt it unnecessary to be so fussy. When the director shared some public health information and showed him the licensing requirements for health standards, the custodian began to view his team role differently and took pride in contributing to the healthiness of the center's environment.

The commitment of a staff member is also dependent upon the response or reward given for that commitment. In the instance of the teacher who is never late for work it is important to acknowledge your appreciation of punctuality, but what other kind of response is appropriate? If other staff members *are* late, is this teacher doing extra work during those first minutes of her day? It may be important to also acknowledge that contribution or compensate for it by giving her extra break time.

If a teacher has done a particularly effective job rearranging her classroom or has attended a useful workshop on her own time, she can be asked to share her experience with the staff. This kind of recognition will reward the teacher and set a positive model for other staff members.

Some directors are comfortable with a more personal reward system. A staff member that deserves acknowledgment will be taken to lunch or given a bouquet of flowers or a small gift. Of course the most obvious reward for good performance by an employee is a bonus or salary increase, but sometimes the small acknowledgments are more feasible for recognition of specific activities.

In addition to reaffirming commitment as a common goal, directors need to foster a sense of loyalty and camaraderie. Each member of the team needs to feel valued and appreciated by the other members. That message comes first from the director. If the staff member is going to be loyal and thoughtful, she must believe that the director respects the staff member's position and that the loyalty is reciprocal. In fostering her team, the director must be continually respectful of the individual. For example, if the director has a conversation with a parent that concerns a staff member, that staff member should be the first to hear about the conversation from the director. Just as the director expects the teacher to report to her anything that reflects on the center, the teacher has a right to hear directly anything that concerns her role as a teacher.

Open communication

An integral part of the team-building process is including the staff in the planning and problem-solving process. A successful team flourishes in an atmosphere of open communication where opinions and questions are encouraged. Each member of the staff needs to believe that when a suggestion or concern is voiced, it is heard.

If there are problems within the staff that are preventing the team-building efforts, it may be necessary to face the problem directly. One way to do this is to devote a staff meeting to the topic of team building. If staff members can agree that enhancing the team feeling is to everyone's advantage, then an open discussion can be very constructive.

Here is a possible agenda for such a meeting:

1. Identify the kinds of behavior that contribute to the team's effectiveness.
2. Identify the factors that detract from the team.
3. Identify the unwritten behavior patterns that have become part of the center's routine.
4. Discuss the impact these behaviors are having on the team.
5. Agree as a team to eliminate some negative behavior patterns.
6. Agree as a team to reinforce some positive behavior patterns.
7. Agree as a team on some new patterns to develop that will make the team more effective.

Because one of the objectives of a meeting such as this is to make certain all the participants feel *heard*, it is useful to use a flip chart or large pieces of paper taped to the wall and have someone record each idea as it is mentioned. Using a brainstorming format encourages open communication.

Clearly defined roles

A common detractor from a successful team is the lack of clearly defined responsibilities. If job descriptions in the staff handbook and personnel policies are specific, each member of the staff should have a clear understanding of her job in relation to other staff. Understanding the boundaries of one's own responsibilities is important. It is also necessary to understand the scope and limitations of other staff. This overall understanding of the center's structure helps each individual see the different priorities that other staff members have. The outdoor supervising teacher who knows that all the floors are swept while the children are outside is more likely to remember to have the children wipe their shoes on the mat before they come in from play. The teacher who knows when art supplies are ordered is going to let the director know about the tissue paper

she needs for a special project in time for the paper to be included in the order. These kinds of seemingly minor details can add up during the days and weeks to either a source of conflict or a source of cooperation.

Putting the team to work

The day-to-day business of the team will be, of course, to work cooperatively to keep the center running smoothly. Occasionally the day-to-day center operation will run into problems and it may be necessary to ask the team to work together toward a solution.

When to involve the team in problem solving

Team morale and productivity are enhanced when the team is included in the decision-making process, but sometimes the issue is not appropriate for group problem solving. The following set of questions will help you determine if the team's participation is desirable.

1. Is the problem important enough? Asking the group to discuss a trivial issue can backfire and make group members resent the poor use of their time.
2. Does the problem concern the entire team? Some problems are strictly administrative and should be resolved by those who will be affected and who are interested in finding a solution.
3. Can team members contribute to the process? If the group is not knowledgeable about the issue, asking for input will be awkward and frustrating.
4. Has a decision already been made? Going through the motions as if the group is being asked to help make a decision, when in fact the director or board has already decided, is insulting and a waste of time.
5. Do you want group input? If the solution is going to need the support of team members to work, allowing them a voice in the decision-making process is one of the best ways to ensure that support. However, it is important to be willing to live with the group's decision when you give the problem to the group to solve.
6. Is there enough time? Sometimes, such as in an emergency, there is no time for discussion. Someone needs to make a decision and act on it quickly.

Problem solving

Once the problem has been identified and the team has agreed to seek a solution, the problem-solving process begins. Sample worksheets related to each of the following steps in problem solving begin on page 50. Copies of these worksheets for reproduction begin on page 56.

Step 1. **Develop a goal statement.**
Step 2. **Collect information.**
Step 3. **Generate options.**
Step 4. **Select options.**
Step 5. **Develop a plan of action.**
Step 6. **Implement the plan.**

Let's say the problem is that several children are not sleeping during naptime and it is getting difficult for staff to keep the children quiet.

1. **Develop a goal statement.**

The first suggested objective was to allow a quiet time to all the children who need a nap.

Although this goal is accurate, it raises some unanswered questions. How much quiet time? How will it be determined when children need a nap? The first step is deciding exactly what must be accomplished. If the objective is stated correctly it will be specific and measurable.

It was decided the objective is to keep the nap room quiet from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

2. **Collect information.**

How many children are napping? How many are staying awake? Is it always the same children? Do they nap at all? For how long? Is the room quiet for most of the naptime? For how long? How many staff members are available? Sometimes a useful way to approach this step in the problem-solving process is to ask: What is hindering movement toward this goal? What is helping?

Hindering
1. The small area of the nap room
2. Lack of available staff to supervise children who do not nap
3. Children who have outgrown naps

Helping
1. Darkened room
2. Soft music
3. Books available for children who are only resting

Based on this information, the team was able to analyze the problem more accurately.

3. **Generate options.**

The brainstorming atmosphere is important at this stage of the process as you think of creative solutions. There are no wrong answers. Try to come up with as many answers as possible at this point in the process. If only *one* solution is offered and it doesn't work,

the process must begin again. It's much better to consider a variety of ideas. In the naptime example, these options were suggested:

1. Change the location of cots
2. Use a larger room for naps
3. Hire extra staff so children who don't nap can go elsewhere
4. Have children who don't nap go to the office
5. Have children who don't nap go to the kitchen
6. Ask parents to keep children up later at night
7. Recognize children who rest quietly
8. Eliminate naps for everyone
9. Find a community volunteer to watch napping children
10. Shorten naptime

Notice that several of the options decrease the hindering forces identified earlier and some options increase the helping forces. If it is difficult to generate options, asking how the hindering forces can be decreased or the helping forces increased may be helpful, using a worksheet such as the one on page 52.

4. **Select options.**

Selecting the most appropriate options can be done through an informal discussion or a more formal charting of the advantages and disadvantages of each possibility. For purposes of illustration, let's list the pros and cons for the example. First, the staff agree that the criteria for the solution will be

a. The solution must serve the needs of the children.
b. The solution must be acceptable to the staff.
c. The solution must not create another problem.
d. The solution must address the objective.

Each problem will suggest its own criteria for selecting options.

Options 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 were rejected as not serving the needs of the children. Option 2 was not acceptable to the staff and would have created a disruption of the lunch routine just prior to naptime.

At the end of the discussion, the idea that was most appealing to staff was rearranging the cots within the nap room. In addition, the director and one of the teachers agreed to try to find someone to help out during naptime.

5. **Develop a plan of action.**

Using a worksheet such as the one on page 54, the team listed the major plan components. Two staff members agreed to figure out the best room arrangement so that the children who consistently needed to nap were clustered away from the door and the children who were not napping. It was decided that the arrangement should be evaluated by the entire staff after the first two weeks and reviewed and revised every month thereafter by the two teachers responsible and the director. Because hiring extra staff midyear would put a strain on the budget, the director decided to call the senior adult center and local high school for volunteers. One teacher offered to contact her church auxiliary. By not having the volunteers supervise the children alone without a teacher, the team members felt they could use volunteers.

6. **Implement the plan.**

Within a week the cots were rearranged according to the new plan. The teacher found two volunteers from her church who were willing to help on alternate days. The director needed a few days to check their references, and both volunteers, needed to have current tuberculosis tests. The two staff members who had previously supervised naptime now alternated between staying in the nap room with one volunteer and going to another part of the center, with the other volunteer to supervise the children who were not napping. It was agreed that the staff would meet at the end of two weeks to evaluate the cot arrangement, the performance of the volunteers, and the reactions of the children to the new system.

Using a worksheet such as the one on page 55, the team identified the potential problems.

1. Children who need naps are staying up because other children are up.
2. Non-napping children are not quiet on rainy days.
3. Volunteers are often absent.

Anticipating these problems before the plan was implemented gave the team a chance to use preventive measures and develop contingency plans.

Managing change

Once a solution to the problem is found, the director must ensure that the change is implemented successfully. Any time you use a new method or routine, you are making a change. Certainly adding new staff is a change. The wise director will recognize that change is always a source of stress for people. The magnitude of the change will determine the amount of stress that is generated.

Overcoming resistance to change

Sometimes staff meet the change with a resistance that is out of proportion to the magnitude of the change. The director needs to recognize the resistance and its cause to deal with it appropriately. The most effective tool during a stressful time will be open communication. It is important that the reluctant staff member be encouraged to voice her concerns so that they can be addressed, but it is also important for the director to initiate open discussions about the ways the change will be monitored and how success or failure will be judged.

Suppose that when the team gets together after the two-week trial period with the new naptime routine,

two teachers are very quiet. Both teachers have worked at the center for several years and enjoy their status as being most familiar with the center's normal routines and procedures. One of the naptime supervising teachers is quite critical of one of the volunteers. The teacher feels the volunteer is trying to get too involved with the children and is too obtrusive. The teacher says that she wants to go back to the old plan because too many children are not napping and the afternoon is too hectic. The other naptime supervising teacher feels the plan is working and the children are happier. She mentions there is less need to discipline the children for not resting quietly. The other two staff members comment on the positive relationships that have developed among the non-napping children.

Can you identify the staff member who is resisting the change? Can you identify the reason for her resistance?

The explanations can be found among the following reasons:

Individual personality. People who like routines and predictability will often resist any type of change. These people need to be warned of changes in advance and need lots of support during the adjustment period.

Misunderstanding or lack of trust. A change can be threatening to an individual if she thinks the change will affect her personally. If, for example, she feels a new staff member will usurp her role, or she thinks the change will create more work, then she will feel threatened. If a staff member views the change as more harmful than helpful, it may be because she does not believe that the director or the team has her best interests in mind. If the director is very clear about all of the ramifications of the change, and tries to view the change from the perspective of each individual, she may relieve some anxiety.

Different assessment or viewpoint. If the individual does not support the change or does not support the particular solution chosen, she will often resist the change. It may be necessary to negotiate for this person's support by either incorporating a part of her solution or involving her in another project that will acknowledge her contribution to the team.

Using a consultant

Almost all problems that arise within a child care center can be solved by the director individually or with the staff working as a team. But on that rare occasion when a solution cannot be found, it may be necessary to use a specialist to provide some insight and facilitate a group discussion or provide some options for the group to consider. It would be appropriate to use a consultant, for example, if the problem concerned an area such as playground design where the group could benefit from the expertise of a specialist in the field. Sometimes a consultant is called when the group has tried several solutions for a particular problem and none has been successful. In that case, the consultant will provide a fresh viewpoint. Perhaps there is true controversy among the staff and you need a neutral party that can listen to both positions objectively and arbitrate the problem. It may be necessary to call in a consultant when the problem-solving process is stymied because you can't quite define the problem! Again, the objectivity of an outsider may help to alleviate the troublesome situation. Centers where directors foster team building and open communication should be able to solve most problems internally.

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 1: Develop a goal statement.

Answer the following questions to help develop a goal statement.

1. What is the problem?

Keeping children quiet during naptime.

2. Is your statement of the problem specific? If not, revise your statement to be as precise as possible.

Staff are having difficulty keeping several children quiet during naptime.

3. What is your goal? (Develop a tentative goal statement.)

To keep all children quiet during naptime from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

4. Evaluate the goal statement by answering the following questions:

Does it start with the word *to*, followed by an action verb?

Yes.

Will it lead to a single key result? Will it lead to the desired result?

Yes. Yes.

Is it stated specifically enough so that results can be verified?

The goal statement specifies that the staff want to keep all children quiet during the 2 hours of naptime. This can be verified by staff.

Does it specify what goal is to be accomplished and when, rather than why and how, the goal is to be accomplished?

Yes.

Is the goal challenging, but achievable?

Keeping all children quiet during 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. is challenging and achievable.

Is the goal compatible with other goals of the organization?

To answer this question, staff must consider the philosophy and goals of the center.

Is the goal readily understandable to those who will help accomplish it?

Yes.

5. What is your final goal statement?

To keep all children quiet during naptime from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 2: Collect information.

1. List the forces that are hindering your achievement of this goal.

2. List the forces that are helping you achieve this goal.

3. Indicate which of these forces are
   - most important
   - most difficult to deal with
   - most controversial
   - most easily changed

A *force* can be people, resources, attitudes, traditions, regulations, values, needs, desires, timing, or location. Consider forces related to yourself, others, the situation, the system, the community, and the home.

Goal	Current status	Hindering forces	Helping forces
Keep nap room quiet from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.	Non-napping children are waking children that want to nap.	1. Small area of nap room. 2. Lack of staff to supervise non-nappers. 3. Children who have outgrown naps.	1. Darkened room. 2. Soft music. 3. Books available for resters.

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 3: **Generate options.**

1. **List the options for accomplishing your goal.**
2. **Evaluate each option. Which options decrease hindering forces? Which options increase helping forces? (See Step 2: Collect information.)**

Options	Effects
1. Change the location of the cots.	Decreases hindering force #1.
2. Use a larger room for naps.	Decreases hindering force #1.
3. Hire extra staff so children who don't nap can go elsewhere.	Decreases hindering force #2.
4. Have children who do not nap go to office.	Decreases hindering force #2.
5. Have children who do not nap go to Kitchen.	Decreases hindering force #2.
6. Ask parents to keep children up later at night.	Decreases hindering force #3.
7. Recognize children who rest quietly.	Creates a new helping force.
8. Eliminate naps for everyone.	Decreases hindering force #2.
9. Use a community volunteer to watch napping children.	Decreases hindering force #2.
10. Shorten naptime.	Decreases hindering force #2.

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 4: **Select options.**

1. **Establish criteria for evaluating the solution to the problem.**
2. **Evaluate each option generated in Step 3 according to those criteria.**
3. **Eliminate any option that does not meet one or more of the criteria.**

	Criteria for evaluating the solution				
Options	Serves the needs of the children.	Is acceptable to staff.	Does not create another problem.	Addresses the original objective.	
1. Change the location of the cots.					
2. Use a larger room for naps.		does not meet	does not meet		
3. Hire extra staff.					
4. Move non-nappers to office.	does not meet				
5. Move non-nappers to kitchen.	does not meet				
6. Allow children to stay up later.	does not meet				
7. Recognize children who rest quietly.			does not meet		
8. Eliminate naptime.	does not meet				
9. Recruit volunteers to watch nappers.					
10. Shorten naptime.	does not meet				

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 5: **Develop a plan of action.**

Major plan components	Steps	Start and finish date	Person hours	Person responsible
Rearrange cots.	1. Draw new plan.	10/3–10/10	6	Diane and Joan
	2. Post and try plan.	10/11–10/25	0	All staff
	3. Review plan.	10/25–10/25	5	All staff
	4. Revise plan.	10/26–10/26	2	Diane and Joan
Use volunteers to watch nappers.	1. Call senior center.	10/3–10/5	15 min.	Mrs. Cox
	2. Call high school.	10/3–10/5	15 min.	Mrs. Cox
	3. Call church.	10/3–10/5	15 min.	Lila
	4. Train volunteers.	10/9–10/9	3	Mrs. Cox
	5. Try volunteers.	10/11–10/25	0	All staff
	6. Review staff.	10/25–10/25	5	All staff

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 6: **Implement the plan.**

Possible problems	High damage?	High probability?	Possible causes of problem	Preventive action	Contingency plan
Children who need naps are staying up because other children are awake.	yes	yes	Transition time is too hectic.	Read a story after lunch.	Allow children who should nap to read or play quietly.
Volunteers are absent.	yes	yes	Lack of commitment.	Train extra volunteers.	Prepare substitute list.

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 1: **Develop a goal statement.**

Answer the following questions to help develop a goal statement.

1. **What is the problem?**

2. **Is your statement of the problem specific? If not, revise your statement to be as precise as possible.**

3. **What is your goal? (Develop a tentative goal statement.)**

4. **Evaluate the goal statement by answering the following questions:**

   Does it start with the word *to*, followed by an action verb?

   Will it lead to a single key result? Will it lead to the desired result?

   Is it stated specifically enough so that results can be verified?

   Does it specify what goal is to be accomplished and when, rather than why and how, the goal is to be accomplished?

   Is the goal challenging, but achievable?

   Is the goal compatible with other goals of the organization?

   Is the goal readily understandable to those who will help accomplish it?

5. **What is your final goal statement?**

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 2: **Collect information.**

1. List the forces that are hindering your achievement of this goal.

2. List the forces that are helping you achieve this goal.

3. Indicate which of these forces are
   - most important
   - most difficult to deal with
   - most controversial
   - most easily changed

A *force* can be people, resources, attitudes, traditions, regulations, values, needs, desires, timing, or location. Consider forces related to yourself, others, the situation, the system, the community, and the home.

Goal	Current status	Hindering forces	Helping forces

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 3: **Generate options.**

1. List the options for accomplishing your goal.
2. Evaluate each option. Which options decrease hindering forces? Which options increase helping forces? (See Step 2: **Collect information.**)

Options	Effects
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 4: **Select options.**

1. **Establish criteria for evaluating the solution to the problem.**
2. **Evaluate each option generated in Step 3 according to those criteria.**
3. Eliminate any option that does not meet one or more of the criteria.

Criteria for evaluating the solution

Options					
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 5: **Develop a plan of action.**

Major plan components	Steps	Start and finish date	Person hours	Person responsible

Managing Change Worksheet—Step 6: **Implement the plan.**

Possible problems	High damage?	High probability?	Possible causes of problem	Preventive action	Contingency plan

Planning and Managing Finances

Introduction

There are some facets of the child care director's job for which you may be unprepared, but perhaps this is most universally true when managing the center's finances. You have come to this profession because you want to work with people, and you perceive budgeting, bookkeeping, and financial calculations as isolated tasks to be performed alone. While it is the director's responsibility to prepare the budget and understand the basic tools of financial management, there are opportunities for collaboration and input from human resources when planning finances. Soliciting advice from financial experts, staff, and parents can supplement your skills, contribute to team building, and strengthen your program.

When you realize that the purpose of sound financial planning and practices is to make the business run more smoothly and efficiently, you can see that this is just one more way to provide better services to children and their families.

The director's role in financial planning

In most centers, the director develops the budget. But in a proprietary center, the owner assumes this responsibility with input from a director. Nonprofit corporations with a board of directors usually require the director to work with the treasurer on a preliminary and final budget presented and approved by the board.

All directors must have a comprehensive understanding of the importance and purpose of budgeting and all other aspects of financial management in order to be effective administrators. Planning and controlling an organization's finances influence the quality of services that can be offered. When a director develops a budget, she decides what categories to fund and how much to spend in each category. The amount you spend on salaries, classroom supplies, and food determines the quality of your program. The tuition you charge often determines whether you serve upper, middle, or lower income families. Your budget reflects your philosophy of child care.

How decisions are made in a center is reflected in the director's management style and personal philosophy. Directors who collaborate with staff about curriculum, encourage parent participation, and invite community volunteers into their programs should also see that soliciting input on financial planning is one more way to build relationships and strengthen programs.

Soliciting input on financial planning

The complexity of developing a budget and managing a center's finances is dependent upon factors such as licensed capacity, type of ownership, and diversity of funding sources. Soliciting input on the budgeting process or other aspects of financial management can be beneficial. Hiring an accountant or bookkeeper to help develop and manage budgets, and payroll and tax records is an option for most small to medium centers, but for centers with large enrollments and multiple funding sources, it is a necessity.

Directors of small to medium centers who want help with budgets and other financial matters have a number of inexpensive or free resources available to them. First, if parent involvement is a goal of your program, consider asking a parent with accounting or bookkeeping expertise to review your current financial practices and offer advice. Her personal investment in

the center can provide you with a unique perspective on planning your budget. This investment may also provide you with continuing support if you need it. Discuss the components required to manage the center's finances with this parent and solicit her advice. This person may offer to make bank deposits for you, help prepare tax statements, or post monthly receipts. She might suggest hiring an accountant or bookkeeper to maintain a portion of the necessary records.

If you have limited funds for accounting costs, consider asking a financial expert if she will offer reduced rates while she helps develop your initial budget. Many accountants will be happy to charge lower monthly rates for a human service organization, particularly on a one-time-only basis.

Some communities have volunteer organizations of retired business people who have years of financial or management experience that they are happy to share with businesses. Call your Chamber of Commerce or Community Council for information on this service.

Successful organizations find that soliciting input from employees and consumers is an effective strategy. When individuals are given the opportunity to offer ideas, they feel a sense of belonging and are more committed to the ideas they help generate. Asking parents and staff for their opinions during the budget process not only allows them to appreciate the complexity of your organization, but enables them to understand the relationship of parent fees to staff salaries. Income and expense categories impinge on each other. The budget process can sensitize individuals to the complex issues of providing high quality care in any group program serving young children.

The basic components in financial planning

The following information provides a director of a small center with the basic components of financial planning. To prevent becoming overwhelmed by finances, divide financial management into several small categories. Remember that for some directors, not every one of these categories is a personal responsibility. Delegate or solicit input according to your strengths and weaknesses and desire for collaboration.

Preparing the budget

An annual operating budget lists the projected expenses and income for a center operating at full capacity during a 12-month period. You can determine when to begin your calendar year. Use January 1 to December 31, September 1 to August 31, or July 1 to June 30, depending on your center's yearly schedule.

Projecting expenses

Using a 12-column ledger sheet (available at stationery and business supply stores), write the months of the year across the top and list expense categories such as rent, food, salaries, etc., down the left side. If you have records from a previous year, you will be able to identify each expense category and estimate monthly amounts. If you do not have prior records because you are starting a new center or if there are significant changes in the number of children or the programs offered, base your estimates on information gathered from directors of other centers or your own best guess. Be sure to add any special expenses that would not have been reflected in the prior year's budget, and eliminate any categories that were not used. In projecting expenses, remember to plan for unexpected purchases and overestimate each category by a small percentage.

You may want to compute the per child cost of your program. Certain expenses, such as rent and the telephone bill, remain constant whether your enrollment is high or low. But all of the consumable materials, utilities, and other expenses fluctuate with enrollment. To determine the cost per child per month or per day, use last year's expenses (and adjust for inflation). Divide the expenses by 12 to determine your per month cost, and then divide your per month cost by the number of children served. This will give you the cost per child per month. To determine the cost per child per day, divide the per child per month cost by 20. For example:

annual expenses = $80,000

divided by 12 (months) = $6,666 (per month cost)

divided by 36 children = $185 (per child per month)

divided by 20 days = $9.25 (per child per day)

If you know how much each child costs per day (or week, month, or year), then you can interpret the significance of fluctuations in enrollment.

You may also want to know the cost of providing care for preschoolers, infants, or other segments of your center's population. By computing for each segment you discover, for example, that the school-age program costs less than infant care. This information may cause you to consider changing the population you serve. Use a worksheet such as the following to determine your cost per child.

Months

Expense categories	J	F	M	A	M	Jn	Jl	Ag	S	O	N	D	
Salaries													
F.I.C.A. and withholding													
Rent													
Utilities													
Food supplies													
Curriculum supplies													
Office supplies													
Maintenance													
Transportation													
Insurance													
Advertising													
Taxes													
Other													
Subtotals per month													**Total per year**

Total expenses $ _____

Total number of children served _____

Divided by 12 = $ _____ per child per month.

Divided by 20 = $ _____ per child per day.

Projecting income

To anticipate the income for the next year, you will need to project the number of children that will be enrolled in the center. Use the previous year's figures as a guide if they are realistic.

Registration fees or special program fees should also be estimated. A good rule of thumb is to be conservative in projecting income.

Using a separate sheet with 12 monthly columns, disburse the projected income for each month:

	Months												
Income categories	J	F	M	A	M	Jn	Jl	AG	S	O	N	D	
Tuition fees													
Registration													
Fundraising													
Late fees													
Other													
Subtotals per month													**Total income per year**

Once you have projected both expenses and income for 12 months, you will begin to see patterns. When do you have the most expenses in utilities? Is it the same time that you have high supply expenses? What time of year is your income the highest? The lowest? Sometimes just studying these patterns will suggest changes in your spending. Can your utility bills be averaged and paid in equal monthly installments? Can your insurance be paid in the same way?

Balancing the budget: decreasing expenses

If projected expenses exceed the projected income, the budget is not balanced. You will need to reduce expenditures or increase income to make your budget balance.

Let's say you want to reduce expenditures. Expenses fall into three categories: fixed expenses that remain the same each month such as rent, loan payments, etc.; variable expenses may be utilities or supplies; irregular expenses occur periodically and include insurance, taxes, or repairs. If you identify the variable expenses in your budget, you may see immediately which budget items can be cut. Although each center's budget is unique, all centers must hire staff and buy supplies. There are ways of saving money in these areas.

Payroll

Salary expenses make up 75 to 85% of a center's budget. It is the largest expense category and plays a critical role in the quality of your program.

Payroll is determined by the number of staff you have, their rate of pay, and the number of hours they work. Licensing regulations set minimum standards for staff-child ratios, but you may choose to exceed these standards and hire additional teachers to ensure a better quality program. Rate of pay is usually determined by the local job market, type of program, and job qualifications. Some centers control payroll costs by monitoring the number of children attending each day and varying the number of staff accordingly. This chart is an example of one center's staff-child ratio at various times during the day:

Are there times in this day when this center could have fewer staff members present? Does the class ratio chart suggest ways the center could operate more efficiently?

This chart provides one source of information in determining your staffing needs. A good administrator realizes the complexities of cost effectiveness and the provision of high quality programs for young children and considers such factors as the ages of the children in each group, the physical setting, and the responsibilities of each staff member before deciding to change the staff-child ratio. Good directors are also aware of the importance of salary to employees' self-esteem as recognition of the valuable service they provide.

	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00	5:00
Group 1										
staff	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
children	12	14	14	19	19	19	19	19	15	10
Group 2										
staff	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
children	4	7	9	9	9	9	12	12	12	8
Group 3										
staff	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
children	21	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	15
Group 4										
staff	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
children	11	11	14	14	14	14	14	14	11	11

Supplies

The large number of consumable supplies used in a child care center can be either a source of economy or a source of extravagance. To save money, monitor when and how supplies are used. Whenever possible, order supplies in volume from the least expensive source. You know that running to the store for a loaf of bread one day and going out again for milk the next day is more expensive and less efficient than making a list of all the items you will need and shopping only once. The same principle applies when buying supplies for your center.

Making an initial inventory of supplies is time consuming, but well worth the effort! List all the art materials, office supplies, cleaning supplies, and paper products used in your center, and decide the minimum amount of each item you would like to keep.

Once you have a complete list, ask for cooperation from staff to keep supplies in stock. Devise a method to help staff report when a particular item is running low. You might post a list of supplies near the cupboard or shelf where they are kept so staff can make a note when to order more. The point is to reorder supplies in time to prevent running out at the last minute and buying them at a higher price.

Before buying items in bulk, consider the amount of storage space you have, shelf life of the item, and the additional costs of shipping or delivery. Some supply companies have minimum orders that may be too large for your center alone, and you might consider cooperative buying with another nearby center. In general, volume buying from catalogs or supply houses will be less expensive than buying through retail stores. Try obtaining several bids on one order to see who has the best prices.

Balancing the budget: increasing income

If your budget still doesn't balance after reducing projected expenses you must find a way to increase income. Following are solutions many child care administrators consider when faced with this situation.

Enrollment

Projecting income for your budget includes projecting the number of children you expect to enroll during the year and how much tuition you intend to collect. Are your enrollment projections based on guessing or did you use last year's attendance records as your guide? Are you anticipating full enrollment at all times or does enrollment fluctuate? Because tuition is usually the biggest source of income for a center, it is important to examine enrollment patterns to see if changes in policies or the program might influence more families to use your center.

If enrollment is less than capacity it is important to evaluate the reasons. Most parents select a center for location, cost, type of program, and physical appearance. How does your center compare to other centers who operate at full capacity? Would changing location increase enrollment? Is that a cost-effective alternative? Is your tuition higher than other centers? Do you offer a higher quality program than others do? How do you communicate this to the public? How does your center appear to a prospective family? Considering these questions may help you see where you need to make changes so your program is more competitive and attractive.

Successful businesses are aware of the importance of exposure. How do you advertise your program? How do parents know you exist? Of course, the best advertisement is always a satisfied parent! But aside from word-of-mouth advertising, look at other ways to tell people about your center.

You can encourage parents to display your brochure in their workplace. Or sometimes a nearby church or elementary school will pass out information about your center. Some centers offer a "finder's fee" to a parent if she brings in a new enrollee.

Other common methods of advertising include the telephone directory, newspapers, direct-mail brochures or flyers, and open-house events. The size of your center and the costs of these methods in your area will determine which method is best for you.

If your program is of high quality and parents are not aware of this, consider becoming accredited by NAEYC's National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. Professionally sponsored, voluntary accreditation is a concept that is well understood by the public as one that helps ensure that the services offered are of high quality.

Tuition or fees

The simplest way to increase income and achieve a balanced budget in any center is to raise tuition. However, careful consideration must be given to the impact this would have on families in your program. How much do you need to raise tuition to balance the budget? Could all families afford this increase? How would you deal with a significant number of families withdrawing their children because they can't pay your rates?

Know what other centers are charging. Know what your families are willing to pay. You may be able to charge more than other centers if parents feel your center is unique and it meets their needs. You may want to serve low-income families and know that even though parents want to pay more, they can't.

Soliciting help on the budget or keeping parents informed of your financial situation will help families understand when you must ask them to pay more. Some centers hold meetings to discuss the budget each year and give parents the opportunity to ask questions and provide input on alternative sources of funding.

Collecting tuition

Many centers lose money because of inefficient systems for collecting tuition. Do you have a written policy concerning late payments? Bad checks? Do you offer discounts if parents pay in advance? How diligent are you about collecting overdue accounts? Are parents required to give notice before withdrawing a child? Take a close look at losses that occur because of these problems. You may need to implement policies that encourage all parents to pay their tuition and pay it on time.

Optional sources of income

Many centers supplement their income by holding annual fundraising events. Some centers rely on this source of revenue for specific needs such as the purchase of a piece of playground equipment or a new piano. Before you decide to involve your center in fundraising, be sure to consider the amount of work required. Discuss the positive and negative implications with parents and staff before you initiate any fundraising effort.

Credit and borrowing

One way to increase the purchasing power or cash flow of a business is through credit. Opening an account with businesses you use frequently—a maintenance firm, printer, janitorial supplier—is helpful if you need supplies or services and do not have cash available. To keep your credit accounts, pay them promptly. Having established credit is beneficial if you ever need to borrow money.

Living within the budget

After you have a final balanced budget for the year, inform anyone in the position of making purchases of budget limitations. For example, head teachers, teachers, and cooks must know allowable monthly expenditures for budget categories for which they are responsible. A staff meeting would provide the opportunity to inform personnel of procedures for recording purchases and necessary monthly reports.

For good record keeping, develop a form for purchases. It might be a simple statement such as

Purchasing Record

Item(s) purchased _____

Amount _____

Charged to _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Store receipts must be attached to this form and filed.

If a teacher frequently makes small purchases, provide her with a form that allows her to list several purchases. Reimburse her with one check. If volume purchases are made, develop a form for staff to request items.

Posting expenses and income

Carefully posting expenses and income to correct accounts each month and comparing figures to your projected budget is very important. You'll find these figures match or come close in many categories. However, if your original projections are not accurate, determine why and make notes for use in preparing next year's budget.

Having a reserve fund

No matter how carefully the budget is prepared there is always a chance that something totally unexpected will occur. Your air conditioning system breaks down and needs to be replaced or a local business relocates and you lose a significant percentage of your children. Can you handle the additional expenses or loss of income? One way to deal with unexpected expenses is to allocate a portion of your income for savings when you prepare your budget. As your savings accumulate, consider investing earned interest to be used for improvements, expansion, or special purchases.

Speak with different people before deciding where to invest your savings. Talk to bankers, stock brokers, or other financial consultants to ensure that you receive the highest return on your dollar and investment terms that meet your needs.

Keeping the accounts

Every business must develop a financial record system. The method you choose for keeping track of expenditures and income is determined by individual needs. Following are the basic accounting systems necessary for all businesses.

Accounts receivable records keep track of payment received. You might have a separate sheet or card for each family payment history, or a sheet to record all payments for each class. Whatever system you use should allow you to easily monitor accounts that are overdue.

Accounts payable are records of bills paid. A checkbook provides a record of accounts payable and deposits made to that account.

Payroll should be recorded in a separate journal with each employee having a separate sheet. Document the hours worked, deductions, rate of pay, vacation time, etc., on this page.

The **general ledger** posts each expense into an account and each deposit into an account. When you total these categories monthly, quarterly, and annually, you can see whether or not your budget is working!

Keeping financial records is tedious but important work. A director should decide which tasks to do herself and which to delegate to someone else or hire an expert to do.

Sometimes a teacher or secretary can be responsible for receiving funds from parents. Sometimes a board treasurer can handle the payroll. Or you may enlist an accounting firm to provide monthly statements and submit tax reports.

Here are some important points to consider to guard against improper or dishonest accounting.

1. Request payment by check or money order.
2. Immediately stamp checks and money orders with the center's personalized "for deposit only" stamp.
3. Use prenumbered receipts when cash must be accepted.
4. Be sure bank deposit slips list all check numbers and receipt numbers.
5. Deposit receipts daily. If they must be kept at the center, keep them in a locked safe or cash box.
6. Do not permit the bookkeeper to handle cash receipts or prepare deposits.
7. Do not permit the bookkeeper to sign checks.
8. Make all disbursements by check to ensure documentation.
9. Be certain that all persons regularly handling cash and signing checks are bonded for a minimum of 10% of the audit period receipts.
10. Have a Certified Public Accountant conduct an independent audit of your financial records at least every 2 years.

Effective financial planning requires time and skill. Directors who see the relationship between finances and a high quality program are motivated to learn the fundamental aspects of money management. Directors who understand that budgeting and financial record-keeping can be a collaborative effort will approach these tasks with increased enthusiasm.

Information about NAEYC

NAEYC is . . .

a membership supported organization of people committed to fostering the growth and development of children from birth through age eight. Membership is open to all who share a desire to serve and act on behalf of the needs and rights of young children.

NAEYC provides . . .

educational services and resources to adults who work with and for children, including

- ***Young Children,*** **the** journal for early childhood educators
- **Books, posters, and brochures** to expand your knowledge and commitment to young children, with topics including infants, curriculum, research, discipline, teacher education, and parent involvement
- An **Annual Conference** that brings people from all over the country to share their expertise and advocate on behalf of children and families
- **Week of the Young Child** celebrations sponsored by NAEYC Affiliate Groups to call public attention to the needs and rights of children and families
- **Insurance plans** for individuals and programs
- **Public policy information** for informed advocacy efforts at all levels of government
- The **National Academy of Early Childhood Programs,** a voluntary, national accreditation system for high quality programs for young children
- The **Child Care Information Service,** a centralized source of information sharing, distribution, and collaboration

For free information about membership, publications, or other NAEYC services, call NAEYC at 202-232-8777 or 800-424-2460. Or write to NAEYC, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20009.

naeyc

About the Author

Sherry Storm is the director of Westerner Preprimary, a private preschool and kindergarten, in Los Gatos, California. Prior to becoming a director in 1979, she taught preschool for 6 years. In 1983, she planned and implemented a course for early childhood directors on which this manual is based. For 2 years, Storm coordinated this program. She participated in the field test of NAEYC's accreditation project and now serves as both a validator and validator trainer for the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. An active member of NAEYC for many years, Storm is a member of her local NAEYC Affiliate board. She has been a frequent presenter at local, state, and national conferences.

The Human Side of Child Care Administration

Directors of early childhood programs must

- communicate effectively with staff, parents, children, and the public
- develop administrative policies and procedures
- interview and hire staff
- conduct meetings of staff and parents
- motivate and evaluate staff
- solve problems and manage change
- plan and manage finances

Most directors of child care centers and preschool programs became administrators because they were good teachers and they relate well to other people. Unfortunately, many directors find that being personable and knowing how to be a good teacher of young children are not sufficient qualifications to be an effective administrator. Most directors acquire the skills required through trial and error. Others take special courses in administration. However, many directors do not have the time or funds to obtain the specialized training needed for the job. This manual is a practical resource for directors who may not have access to formal training. Topics are addressed concisely. Examples relevant to child care are used. Helpful worksheets and exercises to facilitate learning are provided. This book will help directors become effective administrators who use the power of human interaction to its fullest potential.

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